

# Christian Courier

A Reformed Biweekly

55th Year of Publication

January 10, 2000

No. 2629 \$1.60

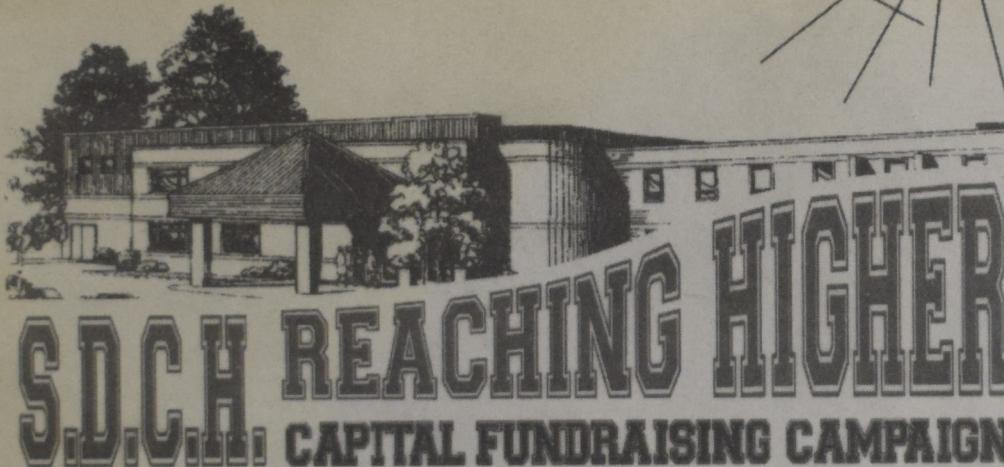
## Small-town Ontario school raises \$1.65 million in 10 weeks

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*They will soar on wings like eagles...  
Isa. 40:31b*



Part of a promotional poster used in Smithville District Christian High School's Reaching Higher campaign.

### Alan Doerkson

SMITHVILLE, Ont. — A Christian school in the Ontario town of Smithville has managed to raise \$1.65 million in only 10 weeks to fund an expansion of its buildings. Support came not from big cities like Toronto but from small but supportive communities such as Smithville and nearby Beamsville, Welland and Dunnville, reports John Langendoen, who co-ordinated the campaign.

"We're very happy and thankful," said Langendoen in late December. He described the campaign as "an overwhelming experience."

Smithville District Christian

High School launched the fund-raising campaign on October 12, just after Canadian Thanksgiving. The purpose of the campaign was to raise money to expand the school, so that a new double gym with drama and music rooms, a new library, a new computer room and a student lounge can be added to the school.

### Reaching higher

"We had a minimum goal of \$1.5 million," explained Langendoen. "The construction cost is \$2.2 million." Construction will most likely start in early summer

of this year.

"The theme of the campaign was Reaching Higher," said Langendoen. This was based on Isaiah 40:31, which reads: "... But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (NIV) The campaign was entitled the Smithville District Christian High School Reaching Higher Capital Fundraising Campaign.

Although the fundraising was "kicked off" last October, planning started much earlier. "In

*See NETWORK page 3...*

### Theme: News Feature

## Mother Church at the turn of the millennium



RICHARD VAN HOUTEN

Richard and Susan van Houten in Jerusalem.

### Richard van Houten

JERUSALEM — Thirteen heads of Israel's 13 official churches walked onto a stage in Bethlehem's Manger Square on December 4, 1999, decked out in the various cassocks, robes and headgear of their traditions. They all sat at a table together, the first time they had done so in the history of the modern state of Israel. Perhaps longer. Five thousand people gathered in the square — no small feat in the land where the Christian population is diminishing rapidly. The program was followed by another historical first — all 13 together entered the grotto where a church marks Christ's birth. The change of the millennium has at least precipitated some improvement in Christian relationships in the land of its founder.

Such high seriousness also has to be met with a little Protestant skepticism. Most of the 13 official churches are small. So we had about 10 little church choirs from the different traditions. The Orthodox churches (five of them) had all-male choirs singing in their unusual piercing voices with open harmonies. As strange as Gregorian chant sounds to many of us Westerners, these sounds were even one step farther removed. The message of the Latin Patriarch started just before 4:15 p.m., but this event did not stop the mosque on the other side of the square from playing its taped call to prayer. The Patriarch politely stopped, stood silently for five minutes, then resumed by saying: "We thank the Muslim brothers for their message."

### Choirs and kisses

As with any outdoor crowd, this one was also here in part to see the pageantry. Marching bands, known as scout troops, started things off. Scottish bagpipes and Italian flutes echoed around the square. People pushed and shoved for position, while Palestinian security forces in at least three different uniforms tried to keep control.

The highlight for most, however, was the arrival of Yasser Arafat. Bethlehem is within the Palestinian National Authority. As one more choir was filing up to the risers, sirens broke through and the presidential motorcade arrived. As the familiar black-and-white checked headdress bobbed along in front of where I was

*See DOVES page 2...*

## Theme: Whither the Church? (News Feature)

# Doves become reluctant peace symbols in Jerusalem

*... continued from page 1*

sitting, the choir waited patiently. Cheers for Arafat dwarfed those for the previous personages and events. Arafat doled out kisses to all the church leaders, and a spokesperson read a speech. Then he listened politely to the choir and the next event, then stood and left. A good chunk of the crowd left with him.

### Reluctant peace symbols

A solemn closing turned into another bit of fun. The program called for the release of 12 doves which were to symbolize the 12 apostles. The doves were brought out in a box and placed along the front of the stage. It was already dark (about 6 o'clock), and cold, around 10 degrees C. When a couple of children opened the box, the sleepy doves looked out at the crowd and just sat in the box. The children tipped it, and a few doves flapped up on the edge. An adult came over and threw a dove into the air. It went straight up about 10 ft., turned and headed back into the box. Another thrown-up dove circled and landed on the head of the Anglican bishop, who good-naturedly took it on his hand for a few seconds before throwing it back to its final perch in the girders above the stage. Eventually, all 12 reluctant peace symbols were forced from their box. Grand ceremony turned into grand fun.

As the general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) [whose headquarters are in Grand Rapids, Michigan], I was present at this meeting as part of 45-member group of church officials from 17 different international families. Known as the meeting of the Secretaries of the Christian World Communions, we meet each year to share the work of our councils, and to discuss some common problems. A couple of years ago, we decided we would meet in 1999 in Jerusalem in a show of Christian unity at the end of this millennium. We were among several guests of honor who came to attend this local Christian event in Bethlehem.

### Showing solidarity

The purpose of our visit was to show solidarity with the Christians in Israel/Jerusalem/Palestine. Although there are several thousand messianic Jews, and several regional ethnic groups such as Armenians, Syrians and Egyptians, the reality is that the Christian church of this land is mainly composed of Palestinian Arabs.

The second reality is that the Christian population is declining. Part of the reason for the decline is



International Christian leaders at the Jerusalem gathering.

RICHARD VAN HOUTEN

Israeli government policy, directed against Palestinians. Of the Palestinian Christian population, only about 45 per cent are estimated to live within today's boundaries. The others are mostly scattered in Palestinian refugee settlements around the region.

While the Israeli government is quick to mobilize its resources to receive new Jewish immigrants, and many Muslim Palestinians have returned, Palestinian Christians have not found a way to organize a return. The Anglican Bishop Riah Abu El Assal shared his dream one evening at his home: to induce a plane load of 400 Palestinian Christians to return. If churches abroad would help, he said, it could be done. He guaranteed that a thousand Christians would be at the airport to welcome them.

### What good in Nazareth?

When Israel granted permission to build a mosque in Nazareth recently, it also drove the Christians further into one another's arms. Five heads of the larger churches signed a joint letter of protest against this action, a joint action that has little precedent in the Holy Land. This has been in the news recently, so I would like to share with you the perspective of the local Christians. In a discussion, a Catholic and an Orthodox resource person both deferred to Bishop Riah, who gave this account.

Nazareth has two churches to which pilgrims and tourists come. A previous mayor, a Muslim, requested that the Christians pull down one of their schools to open up a little plaza some 200 metres from the larger church. The current mayor, a Christian, continued the construction of the plaza, a place where people could gather and rest a bit. Israel was committed to beautifying Nazareth for the tourist trade. It has spent \$80 million

(US) and plans to invest another \$40 million in the town.

At the edge of the plaza, there is a small shrine, about three by four metres, commemorating a Muslim hero. Nazareth is in Israel proper, that is, within the pre-1967 boundaries. Over the years, the Israelis have destroyed many mosques in the north, so there is a history of oppression of the Muslims there.

This year, at the little plaza, a group of more activist (dare I say fundamentalist?) Muslims took a "last stand," claiming the plaza as "religious land."

A court decided that the land actually belongs to the government. So the Muslims petitioned the government for permission to build a mosque. The government not only allowed them to build a mosque to replace the shrine, but ceded an additional 700 square metres to the 139 square metres that they already had. Bishop Riah claimed this government action was a tactic to divide the Palestinian Christians from the Palestinian Muslims, "and they succeeded."

In reaction, the Christians closed their holy places to tourism for two days. They already feel beleaguered by Israeli pressure, and these "occupation" tactics have angered them. Even President Arafat called on the activists to stop building the mosque, and he was supported by many other Palestinian and foreign Muslims. We walked by the site. It does not seem like much. Two or three carpets were spread across a parking lot,

bounded by a log on each side and a stone at the corners. But symbol and precedent count for a lot in this land.

In fact, the precedent may have a more devious aim, Riah suggested. Since the government accommodated itself to fanatics in this case, could the day come when a group of equally fanatic Jews occupies the plaza next to the Al Aksa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock? And then will the government allow a temple building following the precedent of Nazareth?

### Seeking the 'rule of six'

Still, Nazareth is a sideshow, a minor scuffle. When the Palestinian Christians talk about the future of this "holy land," they point to broad political issues that must be settled. What will be the status of Jerusalem? What will happen to the "illegal" settlements (that is, illegal under the Geneva Accords governing the management of occupied territories)? Where will water come from, and who will control the tap? Do Palestinians who were born in occupied

See RESIDENCE page 15...



JERUSALEM—THE CHRISTIAN HERALD PHOTOGUIDE

"Could the day come when a group of fanatic Jews occupies the plaza next to the Al Aksa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock? And then will the government allow a temple building following the precedent of Nazareth?"

## Environment/News

# Network of volunteers key to successful campaign

... continued from page 1

springs, we put together a steering committee," says Langendoen. One "key individual" from each support community was on the committee. The "feeder communities" for the school include Smithville, Welland, Wellandport, Dunnville, Fruitland and Beamsville.

Each key individual was asked to put together a team to do fund-raising in his or her community, explained Langendoen. This had a positive "pyramid effect."

An essential part of each

community's fundraising team was visitors, who would visit people in their homes to discuss the campaign. Most of the people visited "had in the past supported the high school and Christian education."

Another key to the campaign's success was the school's promotion committee. "They did a fantastic job in promotions" and assisted "in a very big way," asserted Langendoen. The committee produced several high-quality, full-color posters, which were put up in churches, schools and local

businesses within the target area. Flyers produced by the committee were distributed to church mailboxes in local Christian Reformed, Baptist and other churches. Campaign volunteers also sent out regular updates on the campaign's progress.

## Strong regional support

Wilma VanderMey, a member of the promotion committee, believes the campaign was successful because "a lot of people see the need for the extension and the greater need for higher Christian

education." She believes the school's support region has an unusually high number of Christian education supporters.

Another factor behind the campaign's success is the fact that the Smithville school is overcrowded, observes VanderMey. It was a "very fast, short campaign," which also may have helped bring success.

Many people were involved with the campaign, including about 80 canvassers (visitors), says VanderMey. Many churches developed committees of campaign volunteers, including her church, Providence Christian Reformed in Beamsville. She was especially involved with planning the kickoff event and the celebration evening, which will be held at a later time.

VanderMey has a personal connection with Smithville District Christian High School, since two of her daughters attend the school.

A promotional booklet for the campaign clearly outlines the school's present situation and the need for expansion. More space is

needed for the school's music program because band and music classes must now meet at Covenant Christian School, Smithville's sister school for earlier grades. There is a great lack of storage and office space at the school, and not enough space is available for drama classes, props and costumes. An architectural drawing of the planned expansion clearly indicates the improved results expansion would bring. Tax benefits to donors are also spelt out.

The Smithville school's mission is to offer "a Christ-centred education, in a nurturing atmosphere, which enables students to develop their talents to their fullest potential for service in all areas of God's kingdom." According to the promotional booklet, "To continue our mission, we need to expand our facilities."

Currently, the school has 296 students, 26 teachers and five support staff. A member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS), it offers grades 9 to OAC (Grade 13).

## A funeral and a feast at Little Mountain

Last Saturday was unusual. I went to both a memorial service and birthday festivities in the space of a few hours. The memorial was a funeral of a different kind, held at Little Mountain Cemetery on Edmonton's northeast edge. A crowd had gathered to mourn the loss of the adjacent natural area. In a bold move the owner had suddenly cleared the site of trees. This was a shocking ending to the five-year effort to save this remnant of aspen parkland. The birthday party was the annual Christmas dinner held in our church basement. The connection between the two events may be hard to see at first, but it is tangible and important.

So why would anyone go to the trouble of mourning the loss of this land? We buy and sell land as a matter of course in our lives. Every day thousands of hectares of land come under the blade as clearing goes on for new homes, schools, businesses, farms, roads and a host of other activities. This process has become a necessary part of life in modern society, both for shelter and economic prosperity. But although we know how to destroy such land, we know much less about how to keep it or to restore it.

### What's so special about Little Mountain?

Naturalists call this area a "remnant parkland." When it was first studied they thought it was simply a patch that had escaped cutting or cultivation. More recently hydrologists have shown that the area is very old indeed. It may be a long-term feature on the landscape and not the result of a recently shifting forest. Aerial photographs and bedrock geology show that it has remained virtually unchanged for most of this century, perhaps even for a thousand years or more. Here, within the city limits, was a unique biotic community that was home to hundreds of resident and migratory species. It had value at many levels, for teaching, research, recreation, beauty and more. It had made, and would have continued to make, a rich contribution to the civic life of Edmonton.

### Short-term gain isn't worth it

For some people these are sufficient reasons to invest tax-dollars to conserve this land. But these arguments rest almost completely on a scientific and econometric foundation. I think that the heart of the question lies elsewhere. We moderns lack a sufficiently large view of land to encompass the

**Creation waits...**  
John Wood



"Little Mountains" in our lives.

We are, I think, on what biblical scholars call an anti-creation pathway (for details see Scott Hoezee's *Remember Creation*, Eerdmans, 1998). It is a pathway to death and not to life, and Moses, Job and the prophets warned Israel to avoid it.

The short-term gain made by destroying the land is a bad idea. It was foolish 2,500 years ago, and it is foolish still today. Our cities are huge compared to those in the ancient world, so the prophets' words are even more chilling today. Said Isaiah: "Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land" (5:8).

And why has this happened? Isaiah makes it plain: "But they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands" (5:12). In many cities across North America we see this same scene played out. The "environmentalists" struggle to protect small parcels of nature. But the seemingly common-sense arguments of private property rights and the "need" for more and bigger borders prevail.

The result is that we are rapidly cutting ourselves off from the earth. We are losing contact with our sense of the "other." This impoverished view of nature flows from, and also reinforces a deeply diminished view of God.

### Remembering so we can re-member

It was a great birthday party, filled with food music and good stories. I have participated in such celebrations for nearly half a century. But last Saturday I celebrated for a new reason. The Savior's birth gives us great hope of restoration. There is hope for a new relation with him, with each other—and with the earth.

In remembering our Creator we have hope of re-membering ourselves to one another and of re-membering ourselves to the land. I pray we will apply this lesson as we begin the New Year.



John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

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## Editorial

# The Church, unsleeping, keeps watch

## Marian Van Til

This first issue of the New Year is about the church. Despite the impression which some people have, *Christian Courier* is not a "church paper"; we're not owned or operated by the Christian Reformed Church; or any other church. But as we launch into a new decade, century, and the third millennium of Christianity, I think it's appropriate that we Christians should be considering both the church and the Church. (Of course, 2000 ends, not begins, a decade, century and millennium; but we've lost that battle!, and either way, this is a crucial time to think on the church.)

By church, lower-case "c," we mean the church as an institution; most of you reading this are members of Reformed or Presbyterian churches; and some of you are Baptist or other evangelical of some sort, or Anglican, Catholic or Lutheran. But all of us who confess Christ, no matter our denominational loyalties (or these days, sometimes non-loyalties) are members of the one, capital "C" Church, the Body of Christ, the *ecclesia* whom Christ has called and marked as his own.

## A long, sometimes crooked path

In this issue you'll get a glimpse into how the church as an institution is faring around the globe.

## Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact  
Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to:  
report on significant events in the Christian community and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective; provide contact for the Christian community.

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Publications Mail Registration No. 09375

But when we talk about how the church as an organization is making out, we're also always talking about people – the Church. So unless a church has become utterly apostate (and we must be careful about making that judgment), when we trace church trends we're always involved with a part of the living Body of Christ, even if we appear to be discussing "externals."

If someone tells me that many new Christian Reformed churches don't have permanent pews, or three new Presbyterian parishes installed pipe organs recently, or all the Anglican parishes in this diocese have just put Bibles in their pews, or the Baptists are enlarging their fellowship halls, that tells me something about the nature and attitudes of the believers who make up those segments of the Body of Christ, as well as something about the institutional churches to which they belong.

In this issue Dr. James Payton of Redeemer College leads us down the path of the church past, directing us to notable where-we've-been landmarks, important in themselves, but which, in turn, act as map lights of sorts, clarifying the way to where we need to go in the future.

In this issue, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey act as both map makers and route promoters, as it were. They formulate and demarcate a liveable, usable, biblical Christian worldview, convincing evangelicals and any of us still doubting why we need such a comprehensive faith framework for our lives if we take our confession of Christ seriously and want to be salty and light-bearing Christians in the new post-Christian time to come. (Harry der Nederlanden and Gideon Strauss discuss the Colson/Pearcey route, providing slight course corrections.)

### The devouring lion still stalks

The Apostle Peter warned at the onset of the Christian age that the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That lion is still roaring and stalking, hungrier than ever. So there's a lot of bad news for (and sometimes about) the church. You'll find a disturbing summary of 10 countries where persecution of Christians is ongoing, flashpoints around the world where it's dangerous to live your faith or even speak it. There are many more than 10 such places, but the ones you'll read about are some of the worst – it is calculated that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century more Christians have been martyred for their faith than in all the other centuries after Christ combined.

Satan also stalks in subtler, softer ways. You'll read of declines in church attendance and falls from orthodoxy because the church, small c, forgetting its mission, sometimes gets preoccupied with admiring itself in the mirror of its own self-importance.

### The Word does not return void

But we can expect good news, too, when the

church takes the Good News seriously and "keeps looking up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The remnants of Christians in those persecuted places are mostly remaining strong (and they covet our prayers more than any material help in the world). Others are joining them, too, despite the danger. In China, for example, the underground house churches are flourishing; and even the state-authorized and -watched Three Self Church is burgeoning in the cities.

Countless denominations are still preaching the gospel and still doing good works around the world and in their own backyards. You'll see one encouraging example of that in Part 3 in our series on the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's work in Central and South America, this time in Honduras.

### Our Savior never slumbers

When we find out about and fellowship with Christians of different cultures and languages in distant parts of the globe – or even when, in this space age, we get to know and interact with Christian friends across oceans and time zones via the Internet, it's a poignant reminder that the Church never sleeps, nor does the Lord of the Church. It makes the Church as the Body of Christ become especially tangible, and the Lord and Preserver of his Church all the more real.

And then I like to remind myself, too, that the Church is also universal in transcending place and time. In many churches, when members recite one of the ecumenical creeds which all Christians confess, it is introduced with the reminder that we are saying the creed "with the Church of all ages." That, I think, helps keep the church as institution in perspective, too. We know that in our joys and faithfulness, and even amidst our failings, bureaucracy and hypocrisy, Christ will remain with, and in, his Church till the end of the age.

There's an evening hymn which puts all this beautifully:  
*We thank you that your church, unsleeping while earth rolls onward into light, through all the world her watch is keeping, and never rests by day or night.*

*As over continent and island each dawn leads to another day, the voice of prayer is never silent, nor do the praises die away.*

*So be it, Lord: your throne shall never, like earth's proud kingdoms pass away. Your kingdom stands and grows for ever, until there dawns your glorious day.*

(*"The Day You Gave Us, Lord, Is Ended,"* stanzas 2-4; text by John Ellerton)

Sure in that knowledge, we need not fear whatever trends the New Year or the new millennium bring. Christ will abide with his Church. We need only stay awake and be faithful.

JANUARY 10, 2000

## Whither the Church?

# Canadian Presbyterian leaders candidly assess their church

Keith Knight

TORONTO — "The vitality of the church is to be found in the local congregation." That's what former moderators of the Presbyterian Church in Canada concluded at a recent meeting.

That's a change in attitude. Not too long ago they firmly believed that the action took place at their national church offices. (Moderators are elected annually to oversee the meeting of the general assembly and to

represent the denomination at various functions.)

"Some in the church may see this shift as tending towards congregationalism," the former moderators' report says, "but there is a proper and an improper kind of congregationalism. Presbyterianism has always sought to maintain a healthy tension between the individual congregation and the three other courts of the church: presbytery, synod and general assembly. A proper kind

of congregationalism emphasizes the connectional nature of the church but sees presbytery, synod and general assembly as assisting congregations in their mission rather than congregations simply being branch offices of the national church."

As a corollary the former moderators concluded that their church would be strengthened if members' gifts were taken more seriously. The church leaders also pointed out that immigrants from Africa, Hungary, Korea and Taiwan, among others, have brought "a new vitality and richness to our church."

### Don't think and act too big

Also seen as a matter of concern is the role of the presbytery (equivalent to a Reformed classis or Anglican/Lutheran/Catholic diocese). Some former moderators see presbyteries as too controlling. They said that too much time is spent at presbytery meetings on structure rather than on what the structure is meant to serve: the mission and outreach of the church. "Our emphasis on presbytery as a 'court' tends to promote an adversarial attitude," said the former moderators' report.

The report also recognized the denomination's relatively small size when compared to the size of the nation. This results in regionalism, which should be seen as an asset rather than a liability, they said. "We need to make a more realistic assessment of what as a national church we are able and not able to do. In view of our small size and limited resources, we should resist the temptation to think and act like a large denomination. We need to focus on a few things and do them well rather than attempting to do a number of things in a mediocre fashion."

### Need 'mainline' witness

The significant role which Presbyterians could and should play within the Canadian scene was also discussed. "We have something distinctive and valuable to contribute to the ecclesiastical, social and political life

of our Canadian nation," it was concluded.

The report also speaks of the importance of maintaining a strong Reformed-based witness. In the last decade or more, the denomination, like other mainline churches, has suffered something of an erosion of central Christian beliefs and practices.

"A mainline witness that affirms the central truths of the Christian faith is much needed on our Canadian scene. We should be a Christ-centred church. There is a tendency in mainline Protestantism to soft-pedal the divinity and centrality of Christ. The strong Reformed emphasis on Jesus Christ as truly human and divine and on his sacrificial death as the atonement for our sins must inform our whole life and mission as a church."

### Hunger for the biblical message

The former moderators candidly acknowledged that some congregations are "struggling and dying." And they noted the overall decline in Presbyterian Church membership, making simply surviving a "dominant concern." They asserted, "It is incumbent that we move beyond a survival mode of existence to being a church that is alive and active in mission and service."

To remain alive, preaching of the Word should be "central to church and spiritual growth. People are hungry for a preaching that is biblical, from the heart, and which addresses the main issues that they have to face in their personal and public lives. People are inclined to go to a church where there is good preaching and teaching, and a lively and vital Christian fellowship."

### Why is it?

If someone tells you there are one billion stars in the universe, you believe it. If they tell you that a wall has wet paint, why do you have to touch it?

## Snakes or snow? Which would you prefer?

### Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Every year about this time I ask my mother the same question: "Why was it again that you chose to immigrate to Canada, where the national pastime is snow removal, instead of to Australia, where the climates range from moderate to tropical to desert?" She always gives me the same three reasons: 1) Australia was farther from "home" than Canada is; 2) people in 1950s Europe still perceived Australia as a penal colony; 3) hot climates foster big snakes and too many rodents (that's how the snakes get so big).

It doesn't really matter, of course. The fact remains that I was born and raised in Canada, and by now you would think that I could have learned to cope with Canadian winters.

In some ways winter was worse for me when I lived in the Niagara Peninsula. There were many mornings when I had to get up early in order to shovel my way out of the driveway. Then I would drive, white-knuckled, into the core of the city of Hamilton, desperately trying not to collide with the myriad drivers who didn't think they needed snow tires. On the homeward journey I always felt a profound sense of thankfulness when I managed to make it to the top of the Niagara Escarpment (Hamiltonians call it "The Mountain") without incident.

Often I would return home only to have to dig my way back into the lane. Have you ever noticed that the snowplow always comes along just as you think you've finished shoveling? I sometimes wondered if they were lurking around the corner just waiting for me to lift the last shovel full of snow so they could fill in the end of the driveway again. I do realize that excessive snow shoveling can be accompanied by paranoid delusions and a transference of hostility toward all snowplow drivers!

### Winter isn't all woe

Those days are behind me now. One advantage of living on a farm is that most of the snow is removed by tractor and blower. And there's no city traffic to deal with out here. Still, I find winter a challenge. Days are short. Nights are long. We buy light bulbs by the carton. My face gets pale from lack of sunlight (I call it "winter white"). Cold and flu bugs abound.

My paranoia is now triggered by weather forecasters. I am convinced they deliberately lie by continually promising "warmer temperatures and some sunshine by the weekend." The forecast never comes true. It's just a way of keeping us alive by false hope.

I will admit there are some sights and sounds of winter that I appreciate. I love those bright winter days when a brilliant blue sky hangs over even more brilliant white fields of snow. Or what could be more beautiful than a hoar-frost transforming the world into an enchanted silver forest?

I like watching little kids bundled up in snowsuits, shuffling onto the school bus; or watching my dog try to catch snowballs. I like working up a sweat on my cross-country skis until I can hear my heart pounding in my ears. I feel cozy and secure when the wind is howling and the snow is swirling while everyone I love is safe and sound at home. And I suppose there's a special blessing in a cup of hot chocolate on a cold day, especially if it's accompanied by a good book.

Okay, maybe winter isn't so bad. After all, Canadians wouldn't be nearly so hearty a breed if it weren't for the annual deep-freeze most parts of the country have to endure. And when it comes right down to it, I guess I would rather face a snowdrift than a giant snake. Any day.



Heidi VanDerSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont.

## Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

**Canada mail:** Publications Mail Registration No. 09375. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1.

**U.S. mail:** Christian Courier (USPS 518-090). Second-class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, Box 110, Lewiston, NY, 14092.

### Subscriptions:

(effective Jan. 1, 1999)	<b>Canada</b>
one year (26 issues)	(G.S.T. incl.)
two years (52 issues)	\$39.54

overseas one year \$80.00 surface mail

### U.S.A.

(G.S.T. free)
\$31.60 (US)
\$60.00 (US)

**Advertising deadlines:** display advertising: Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. (8 business days before publication date); classified advertising: Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. (8 business days before publication date). See classified pages for more details. Advertising rate sheets available. (ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

Address all correspondence to: 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1, Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838, or fax: 905-682-8313, e-mail: subscriptions: ccsuscript@aol.com, advertising: ccadpromo@aol.com

PRINTED IN CANADA



## Arts/Media

## Comment

# The Lord's Prayer hits Britain's pop charts – and is banned

Jay Reay

The Christian faith is under siege in Europe. Everywhere allegiance to Christian denominations is diminishing and church attendance is falling. Christianity's evidence in society is waning. Meanwhile, in Britain, France and Germany the number of Muslims in the population is increasing.

Yet despite much distaste for institutionalized Christianity, there exists much personal faith. The phenomenon of a "godless society" has been fostered by the media and by a narrow segment of society who have a disproportionate degree of influence in our lives.

This was brought home to me in recent weeks here in Britain by a particularly unpleasant form of anti-Christian sentiment almost entirely propagated by the broadcast media.

Many of you will have heard of Cliff Richard, the pop singer who

this year celebrates 40 years in show business. Sir Cliff (he was knighted last year for services to the British music industry) is a deeply committed evangelical Christian, and often declares his faith in public. As so often these days, this makes him a target of abuse from less talented "celebrities."

Richard's specifically Christian recordings are hugely popular among Christians of all ages, as are his concerts at evangelical youth camps each summer. He also continues his very successful mainstream pop career, where every year he releases music without overtly Christian lyrics.

### Blatant discrimination

1999 was different. Near the end of the year, Richard released a record called "Millennium Prayer," the Lord's Prayer set to an up-tempo version of "Auld Lang

Syne – important to Christians, well-known to people of other faiths, appropriate to the time, thought-provoking, far from bland. The record is well-produced, everyone knows the music, and almost everyone knows the words by heart. All royalties from the recording are going to charity.

The record was banned by most of the pop music and easy listening radio stations and TV programs here purely because of the overt Christian message it proclaims.

Apparently it is considered to be bad for the image of the broadcasters to associate themselves with faith, truth and a belief in something more important than themselves. These are the stations, incidentally, which play occult-inspired numbers *ad nauseum* (two of them were fined recently for condoning on air paedophilia and rape). Pop singer George Michael called Sir Cliff's song "evil" – and

"vile" and "exploitative."

It is the right of station managers to include or exclude music in their play lists because of its intrinsic merit or its fit with the musical taste of their audience. But neither reason is relevant here. The same stations that refused air time to the "Millennium Prayer" play overtly atheistic songs, many of which advocate drugs, sexual aberration, violence or the current obsession with the occult, sometimes with horrible results. Less contentiously, many of them also play Hindu bhangra or music from other religions – much of it good music – with overt messages from those faiths.

### Backlash

All this led to an uproar on the morning TV magazine shows and in the print media. The fashion police who dictate what is and what is not to be made widely available

have come unstuck. Our apparently godless public in their hundreds of thousands have gone out in our unusually wintry weather and bought the recording.

As I wrote this in mid-December, "Millennium Prayer" had been at the top of the UK Top Ten Pop Music Hit Parade (just another to add to Cliff's ten previous No. 1 hits) for three weeks and looked like it might snag the commercially coveted Christmas No. 1. John Lennon's just re-released "Imagine" would be its only serious competition.

I'm not a great fan of Sir Cliff's music; mainstream pop is not to my taste at all. But I was delighted to see his success in the face of blatant discrimination. Even more, his Christian faith has achieved greater publicity and media coverage at this highly competitive time than it would have done otherwise. I might even buy the record.

## Calvin College prof releases classical music album by women composers

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Dr. Charsie Sawyer, a professor of music at Calvin College, has a deep personal connection to her new album, *The Unknown Flower* (due for release any day now). It features classical music, the genre she loves best of all, and all six composers featured on the album are women. Not only that, but four of the six are, like herself, African American women.

"I began dreaming about an album like this probably 20 years ago," says Sawyer. "For many people the definition of classical music is European and usually white, male Europeans who are dead. Now I'm not saying those people didn't compose magnificent classical music, for they most certainly did. But classical music is alive and well in this century in this country. And much of it is being done by women, and often those women are minorities. This record, I hope, will help dispel some stereotypes about classical music."

Sawyer holds a doctor's degree in musical arts from the University of Michigan and is an accomplished vocal performer, having sung everything from orchestra to opera. She sings all 23 tracks on *The Unknown Flower*, some 56 minutes worth of music. She also did the almost four years worth of research that went into selecting the composers to be featured,



CALVIN COLLEGE

Dr. Charsie Sawyer

traveling to such places as Howard University, the Smithsonian and the Schomberg Institute in Harlem, New York City, to trace the tracks of modern-day composers.

### Schubert's art form, with jazz influences

Sawyer found over 100 women composers, but had to boil the list down to six for the album. Finally, after some tough choices, she decided to record song cycles (groups of songs by one composer that are meant to go together) by Valerie Capers, Lena McLin, Lettie Beckon Alston, Betty Jackson King, Libby Larsen and Jacquelyn Sellers.

Sawyer got a chance to meet five of the six composers (all save

Jackson) and discovered that many have interesting stories. For example, Valerie Capers lost her eyesight at the age of six, but went on to Juilliard. Classically trained she also had jazz influences because of her father's ties to Fats Waller and her brother Bobby Caper's work in Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria's Afro-Cuban band. Sawyer chose to record a Capers' song cycle called "Song of the Seasons" that was commissioned by the Smithsonian Institute.

Lena McLin was born in Atlanta but moved to Chicago to live with her uncle Thomas Dorsey. She has over 400 compositions to her credit, ranging from spirituals to art songs. Lettie Beckon Alston is a professor of music at Oakland University who was the first African American to receive a Doctor of Music Arts degree in Composition at the University of Michigan, while Libby Larsen is the best-known and most celebrated composer on the album, having won accolades from a variety of sources. Jacquelyn Sellers has been Principal Horn with the Tucson Symphony since 1982 and played the French horn on *The Unknown Flower* to accompany the four songs in her song cycle called "Spiritual Settings."

*The Unknown Flower* was recorded this past summer in the Calvin College Fine Arts Center. In addition to Sellers, accompanists

included pianists Susan Keith Gray (one half of acclaimed duo Kobayashi/Gray), Calvin professor Hyesook Kim and cellist Karen Krummel (a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony and Calvin adjunct faculty member). Linda Hoisington, also an adjunct faculty member in piano at Calvin, played bells on the album.

Calvin College also played a big role in the production of the al-

bum. Sawyer received a grant from the Calvin Alumni Association and a summer research grant from Calvin. In addition, the entire album was recorded and produced by the Calvin Technical Services department. And the cover was designed by Calvin communications professor James Korf while Calvin's Gary Lepsch and Jazmyne Fuentes did work on the liner notes and the design.

## Crimson with chagrin, consumer invented credit card

Marian Van Til

Credit cards were not invented in the Garden of Eden, as one not-so-politically-correct wag has said they were. But perhaps we should give credit where credit is due:

The credit card is rooted in the idea of allowing "consumers" to buy on time. That idea took hold in the 1920s. By the late 1940s, some department stores and oil companies had issued "courtesy cards" to their customers which granted them credit in advance of a purchase.

But the real credit must go to American businessman Francis Xavier McNamara. One day in 1950 McNamara was lunching out (not to be confused with pigging out) and eventually discovered that he had left his cash at home. He was, apparently, immensely embarrassed. And, in future, not wanting his name discredited, he invented the Diners Club. It issued a card good for meals, lodging and other travel expenses, and was the prototype for all future credit cards.

This scintillating information, and much more, is set down in *Panati's Parade of Fads, Follies, & Manias* by one C. Panati.

JANUARY 10, 2000

## Whither the Church?

# Book reveals disturbing statistics, offers hope, re: falling church attendance in Britain

Jay Reay

LONDON — There has been a plethora of public soul-searching about the state of Christianity in Britain in recent months. In September the Church of England's Diocese of Oxford published the results of a survey of priests and communicants in the diocese about why people weren't attending church as often as they used to, and what the church should do about it.

In November the Church of England's Archbishop's Council published a complex set of statistics about the size of its congregations in England and Wales. Later in the month, the decline in attendance at Sunday worship among English Roman Catholics in favor of Saturday evening Mass was discussed at some length in general

newspapers. And the first week of December saw the publication of a handbook called *Religious Trends 2000-2001* (edited by Peter Brierley, London: HarperCollins, 1999, ISBN 0551-03237-5), which provides a huge spread of data about the Christian church in the UK.

### Post-Christian era

*Religious Trends 2000-2001* is the second volume in a series first begun in 1972 compiled by Dr. Peter Brierley, a professional statistician. Among the stark facts:

- One in three British people attended church in 1930; fewer than one in eight do today.
- Far fewer children are going to church as well: in 1904, half of all British children regularly attended Sunday services; now fewer than

one in 20 grow up going to church.

- The number of people stating a belief in a personal God has declined in the last 40 years to 31% from 43%, with an increase to 27% from 2% in those stating a disbelief in God;

- Only one person in four can recall having heard or read anything from the Bible, and half of all teenagers polled find the Bible "boring."

Against that, the statistics also show that more than one million people over age 65 watch the weekly television series "Songs of Praise," and this long-running program has more viewers now than ever. (Those one million older viewers make up three per cent of the country's total population.) On the other end of the age spectrum,

an increasing number of young people are attending charismatic services. This certainly seems to indicate a desire for Christian faith which the various institutionalized denominations are not meeting.

### Helpful beyond Britain

*Religious Trends* is a valuable sourcebook of information and projections for those who have to manage the temporal estates of the 247 Christian denominations represented in Britain.

The book looks at Christian churches in Britain over the last century, but also gives a statistical snapshot of the world at the close of the second millennium. And it provides comparisons with other faiths in the UK.

The pages of tables and graphs

seem daunting at first, and if the book has a fault it is that the text summaries do not help the non-specialist to understand what the information means in practical terms. But the knowledge which church leaders need to acquire will certainly be greatly enhanced by the work of Brierley and his team.

Careful study of the messages underlying all these facts will enable the various Christian denominations to reach out more effectively to all those people disillusioned by the church. This handbook is a valuable resource which offers the opportunity for the Kingdom of God to be brought to the people of Britain, but also contains helpful messages for Christian churches everywhere.

## Religion newswriters pick top stories of the millennium

NEW YORK, N.Y. (EP) — Martin Luther was the top newsmaker of the second millennium, according to a survey of members of the Religion Newswriters Association. The Protestant Reformation was named the top religion story by 30 participating secular journalists who cover religion.

In 1517 Luther challenged the Roman Catholic Church, nailing 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. His condemnation of corruption in the church sparked the Reformation, which led to the Christian church's second major split and the Catholic

counter-reformation.

Gutenberg's use of movable type to create the first mass-produced Bible was number two on the list of top news stories, followed by the Great Schism of 1054 when Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism went their separate ways.

Other top religion news items of the year include:

- \* The Nazi Holocaust, and the resulting founding of the modern state of Israel.

- \* The launch of the Crusades in 1095 to wrest the Holy Land from Muslims.

- \* The spread of Islam in Africa and Asia.

- \* The reforms to the Catholic Church resulting from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

- \* The protection of religious freedom in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, foreshadowed by the establishment of a Pilgrim colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620.

- \* Challenges to traditional religious beliefs by 19th century figures including Darwin, Freud, Marx and Nietzsche.

- \* The 1906 Azusa Street revival, which launched the Pentecostal movement.

## Young people flocking to church in Chinese cities

BEIJING (Compass) — The younger generation is suddenly flocking into China's churches, radically transforming the composition of many congregations from mainly elderly people to over 50 per cent young people, say some China observers. But according to the Rev. Sun Xi-Pei, vice-chair of the China Christian Council, "We can keep only about one third of these young people. Our big challenge is to turn growth into quality."

Despite the watchful eye of the government, churches of the official Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) are bursting at the seams with young people in the larger cities. House churches also report a similar increase in young people and are often the beneficiaries when many tire of the official church, which must toe the government line.

A Three Self pastor in Wuhan told the congregation of St. Michael's on December 5, "It used to be in this city that the Religious Affairs Bureau would say, 'One more Christian, one less Chinese,' but now they say, 'One more Christian, one less criminal.'"

## Confidence in global mission eroding

MARKHAM, Ont. (Faith Today) — Not everyone on overseas missions or attending Christian post-secondary institutions believes that Jesus Christ is the only way to reconciliation with God, according to the January/February 2000 issue of *Faith Today*. The influences of pluralism and relativism have some Christians puzzled over Christ's nature, role and identity as Savior and Son of God, writes Debra Fieguth.

Fieguth says multiculturalism has had a huge impact on faith. Global missions once reinforced the need for evangelism through presenting other religions as "heathen." Greater immigration has given many Canadian churchgoers

a clearer understanding of the teachings and practices of other faith groups. This has some Christians re-evaluating their beliefs and passion for sharing the gospel.

Christian colleges and mission agencies are at the forefront of

re-envisioning the impetus for conversion, Fieguth reports. Theological interpretations being put forward include the view that God may see people who haven't heard the message of Christ's love as living in the age before his coming.

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## Whither the Church?

# Austrian Calvinists to bless homosexual unions

VIENNA — The Austrian Reformed Church voted near the end of 1999 to allow church blessings for "homosexuals in stable relationships," writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt in *The Tablet*, a Roman Catholic paper in the United Kingdom. Such blessings are also to be made available to heterosexual couples who do not wish to marry.

The vote was passed unanimously at the Reformed Church's November synod in Bregenz, western Austria. The church blessing, which, according to the synod's declaration, "is the equivalent of a marriage in value," may be received as part of a service.

As with many decisions made by synods in Reformed church bodies, the Austrian synod's decision was made in the form of a "recommendation." Individual ministers and congregations can reject it. The blessing would have to be approved by the "qualified majority" of a congregation's council before it could be given, the leader of the Reformed Church in Austria, Superintendent Peter Karner, said in a television interview.

The Austrian church had been discussing the issue for seven

years and, shortly before the synod, a poll had shown that the majority of Reformed Church congregations in Austria were in favor of allowing the blessings, Karner said.

### Reaction

In reaction, the leader of the Lutheran Church in Austria, Bishop Herwig Sturm, said that his church, which had "almost split" on the issue three years ago, remains divided about it. "Intensive talks" on the subject are continuing among the Lutherans, Sturm said, and he himself is in favor of a move like that made by the Reformed Church in Austria.

The leader of the Old Catholic Church in Austria, Bishop Bernhard Heitz, is of the same mind. His church decided to allow church blessings for homosexual couples two years ago.

The head of the Roman Catholic Church in Austria, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, said that while the church fully respects homosexuals as people, it clearly rejects church blessings for homosexual partnerships as being against God's intention and the Vatican's teaching.

# These Serbs are living their Christian faith

BELGRADE (Religion Today) — Bombs and food shortages have failed to stop Serbian Christians from helping needy families. "We have been protected through war. We have had times when it was very unclear whether [we] would be able to continue [our] work," Belgrade-based Bread of Life says. "In all this, [the Lord] has shown us his mercy, and has blessed our work beyond what we could have imagined."

Bread of Life, made up of several Belgrade evangelical churches, works through social institutions and government organizations. It provides food, hygiene items and other aid to refugees from the 1991 Bosnian war, and displaced people from the Kosovo conflict. Bread of Life is also helping Belgrade families still unemployed as a result of the NATO bombing this spring.

### Aware of God's protection

The bombing disrupted ongoing programs and almost forced the ministry to cease. "That was a period of finding ways to survive,

while continuing to distribute what we could, to meet the needs of people around us. We were very aware of God's protection," A Bread of Life spokesperson says.

Donations from Christian groups around the world have allowed work to continue. "At the beginning of the year we could not have seen ahead to what we would be experiencing. We thank God for the brothers and sisters of the churches here who are supporting our work in so many ways," says Bread of Life.

The ministry is distributing supplies to needy families through the winter. It said it has given 310 stoves, 3,240 pairs of shoes and 300 winter jackets. Firewood has been given to 600 families and 2,600 families have received winter underwear. The ministry distributed 15,000 parcels of food and 15,000 personal hygiene kits in this month, and some 40,000 Christmas gifts to children.

The group hopes to build a distribution network with churches throughout the country.

# Entering a new era — sort of

*"For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night." (Psalm 90:4)*

When I was a child, one of the doctrines I had the most trouble understanding was the idea of God's timelessness. "God has always existed," my Sunday school teacher would say. "He has no beginning and no end." A God without end I could understand. Some things, such as numbers, just go on forever. But a God who had no beginning? A God who had always been here? That was enough to furrow my brow.

In my mind's eye I could see, as if in space, God stretching backwards beyond the point of Creation. But how far back did he stretch? *Everything* has a beginning: people and animals and civilizations and sin. How could God be without beginning? I accepted it as true (after all, my teacher said so!), but it perplexed me. Creation out of nothing, virgin birth, resurrection — all (relatively) easy to comprehend, I thought. But a God without beginning? Now, years later, the thought still amazes me, but it offers a comfort which it didn't 25 years ago. A God who exists outside of time is the kind of God to whom my heart is drawn.

### God exists outside of time

Over this past year and into the next we will all be stopping to ponder the year, the century, the millennium past. Already MTV has released its top 100 videos of the century (I know you were waiting for that!); and A&E did a show on the Top 100 Most Influential People of the Past 1,000 Years (Martin Luther was #3). Israel has already had to send home members of doomsday cults who were making plans to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem, they being convinced the world will end on December 31. Even people who don't normally stay up late enough to see the ball drop in Times Square are planning for this New Year's Eve.

With all the hype this year end is bringing, it is a

**Chapter & Verse**  
Mary Hulst-Antonides



great comfort to know that God exists outside of time. "A thousand ages in his sight are like an evening gone," we sing. I find it delightful at this time in the world's history to try to glance over God's shoulder, so to speak. This particular turning of the calendar is no big deal to him. He is as he was before; he is as he will be.

God not only exists outside of time, but the passing of time does not change him. He is as "youthful" as he ever was. His panoramic vision can see back to the Garden; it can trace the life of Jesus, who is part of himself; it can watch the progress of the church, and see a future yet to come. And the beauty is, it is all his. He owns it. God owns history, and time and the future.

### From everlasting to everlasting

And in the middle of it all, here we are. The same God who owns history says to each one of us, "You belong to me. I love you." and he reaches those great Creator's arms down to us and holds us close and promises never to let us go.

Such promises we have from such a giant God! As another year, century and millennium dawns, we can take courage. We need not fear, but can rest — rest in the assurance that the one who owns the future is the one to whom we will always belong. We can say confidently: *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God* (Psalm 90:1-2).



Mary Hulst Antonides is pastor of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

# Dutch churches call for changes to euthanasia laws

### Harry der Nederlanden, with files from Kerkinformatie

The Hague, Neth. — The Netherlands has recently attracted critical attention because of its lax laws on euthanasia, which have allowed doctors to end the lives of failing patients with few controls or restrictions.

Three denominations now working closely together, if not united — the Netherlands Reformed (Hervormde), the Reformed (Gereformeerde) and the Lutheran churches — have issued a statement criticizing changes proposed to euthanasia laws.

They point to crumbling moral standards, to the temptation to protect the standard of living against the rising costs of caring for the

sick and failing, and to the devaluation of people in need of help. Acknowledging the difficulty of drawing hard lines between what kind of intervention is or is not warranted, the three churches take a stance on the confession that life is a gift from God. The lines drawn by the proposed legislation are too vague, they warn.

### Doctor shouldn't decide

Among other things, the statement argues that ending a life should not be left to the discretion of doctors but should be a matter for the courts. As the distinction between medical treatment and taking life has blurred, some have begun to broach euthanasia not just because of actual suffering but at

the mere prospect of suffering. The guidelines proposed by the government are too subjective. They leave the door open to ever earlier interventions to end human life.

The churches ask: "Is society so enthralled by the ideals of health and vitality that the level of tolerance for handicaps, chronic illness and prolonged suffering is becoming lower and lower?" The quality of a society ought to be judged in terms of how it values the lives of those who are weak and broken, the churches say. In this light, they stress the need to improve palliative care for the dying. If this isn't done, says their statement, it looks as if society is concerned only with saving itself the expense of caring for the dying.

## Whither the Church?

# Two millennia of Christianity: What then, and what now?

**James R. Payton, Jr.**

Poised on the threshold of the third millennium *anno domini*, contemporary civilization counts its passing years by reference to the birth of Jesus Christ. Christianity was founded upon him and has passed through two millennia. What has happened to and within Christianity during that second millennium, so soon to be completed?

As an anxious world awaited the dawning of the second millennium, Christianity had spread throughout the whole of Europe. With only a handful of exceptions at its periphery, all the peoples of the continent had been brought within the Christian church. Christianity had spawned two civilizations within Europe, one which had already passed its zenith, and another which was yet to rise to its full potential.

### The East apart

In Eastern Europe the greatest period of Christian civilization in the Byzantine Empire was coming to an end. Within a generation, Byzantium began its slide into the long decline that eventually led to her destruction halfway through the millennium: in 1453, Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. During its lengthy decay, Byzantium lost her territory, power, and prestige, but the Christian church within it rose to the challenge of leadership.

This pattern served Eastern Europe well, though, for it prepared the Christian church there – Eastern Orthodoxy, as it would be known – to survive another half-millennium of repression under Turkish rule and five decades of Communist tyranny. Along with propagating the Christian faith, Eastern Orthodoxy preserved

memories of freedom and nation among the peoples of Eastern Europe, a centuries-long process that would see her outlast both the Turkish overlords and the Soviet masters. The third millennium began early for Eastern Europe and Eastern Orthodoxy: in 1989, the unanticipated occurred, and the Iron Curtain collapsed. It remains to be seen what Eastern Orthodoxy will offer the peoples of Eastern Europe in their freedom in the third millennium, but it has served them well in their captivity during so much of the second.

### Expelled from the public square

As the second millennium opened in Western Europe, the outstanding monuments of Christian influence on emerging Western civilization were just over the horizon. Gothic cathedrals would soon pierce the sky, and universities would soon be founded. Hospitals would soon be transformed from warehouses for the dying into havens for recovery. In the early centuries of the second millennium, the Christian church played a leading role in reestablishing civilization in Western Europe.

Governments took counsel from church leadership in the common pursuit of a civilization that would live up to divine expectations. Universities were founded under church auspices, institutions of learning set up to explore the world in the confidence that God had so ordered it that human reason could understand it. Indeed, many of the institutions in western civilization that we accept as a matter of course in our day – including several viewed today as secular – were originally gifts of Christianity to Western civilization.

In the last few centuries of the second millennium, Christianity has lost its leadership in civilization and government, and most of its influence in scholarship and culture. In Western Europe and North America, churches have been relegated to the private sphere, expelled from the public square.

As the Christian church entered the second millennium, it was united. The church existed in different civilizations, but it recognized and protected its unity. During the past millennium, though, that unity has repeatedly been shattered. The 1054 schism between Rome and Byzantium became a gaping wound with the Fourth Crusade of 1204, when Western Christian crusaders sacked Constantinople: this traumatic event permanently severed Eastern Orthodoxy from Western Christianity. Halfway through the millennium, Western Christianity itself was split by the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### Splinters coming together?

Since then, multiplied thousands of denominations have established themselves on the wreckage of ecclesiastical unity. What was once a single voice became a cacophony of discord, with each new denomination proclaiming itself the preserver of Christianity. The fact that Christianity has survived such repeated dismemberment argues for the continued vigor of the body.

The pattern has begun to change, though: during the last century of the passing millennium, efforts to overcome denominational barriers have led to remarkable co-operation. Churches have discovered anew how much they have in common, and ecclesiastical self-assertion has given way to co-operation and mutual respect in a burgeoning ecumenism of various stripes and shades.

### Martyrs' blood flows strong

As the first millennium gave way to the second, Christianity claimed little more than the European continent. During the second millennium, Christianity has spread to the ends of the earth, with missionary endeavors challenging peoples all over the world to find salvation, hope, and peace in Jesus Christ. Christian churches now offer worship on all seven continents, in thousands of languages and dialects. As the third millennium approaches, Europe has backed away from its Christian heritage, but Africa is poised to take its place as the Christian continent. As the second millennium comes to its end, Christians in the third world already outnumber those in Europe and North America.

In the third millennium, Christianity will turn away from its fractiousness and learn to appreciate diversity: co-operation of various kinds will arise, and ecumenical endeavors of many sorts will overcome the divisiveness which has so long besmirched the

As the sec-



SCALA

Gothic architecture: the interior of Cologne Cathedral in Germany features arches, pillars and stained-glass windows, which achieve a feeling of harmony and soaring height.

garments of Christianity. If nothing else, inertia will probably forestall any large-scale organizational reunion, but if Christians can learn to appreciate each other and work together, then the most basic unity will be achieved.

And in all of this, Christians can have good hope: the fact that Christianity has survived the second millennium, with all its changes and challenges, encourages confidence for the future. Indeed, Jesus Christ promised, "Surely I will be with you to the end of the age" – not just to the end of the second (or the third or the fourth) millennium, but to the end of time.

*Dr. James R. Payton, Jr., is professor of history at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario.*



Byzantine art: A detail from a mosaic (probably from the late 900s) by an unknown artist in Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey. In the mosaic, two Byzantine emperors bring gifts to Mary and Jesus.

## Whither the Church?

# Persecution of Christians in the third millennium after Christ: Ten of the world's most difficult areas

*"Political ideology, religious extremism and social instability continue to provide a breeding ground for severe persecution of Christians worldwide," says a Compass Direct report on such persecution. Compass Direct is the news arm of Open Doors (run by Brother Andrew), an organization which specializes in helping Christians in, and bringing the gospel to, areas of persecution worldwide.*

*November 14 was an "International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP)." That event, and the verge of a new century and millennium set the stage for a look at how millions of Christians are suffering for their faith.*

*This report focuses on 10 areas where persecution is pernicious. "Of course," says Compass, "these 10 are not the only places where Christians suffer for their faith, and the problem is often much more complex than can be easily summarized." Yet for Western Christians just beginning to understand the extent of attacks on the church, Compass hopes this report will form a basis for a growing knowledge and involvement.*

MVT

### The Caucasus

#### *Awash in anarchy*

Infamous as one of the kidnapping capitals of the world, Chechnya has martyred several of the Christians it held for ransom this past year. Radical Muslims in the breakaway republic and neighboring Dagestan can be expected to continue kidnapping any Christian believer left in the region, especially local converts of ethnic Muslim heritage who convert to Christianity. The Muslim extremists assume that all Christians have well-heeled contacts in the West who could pay large sums of money. Also, as trained Islamists under the strident influence of Saudi Wahabbism they want to stop all Christian missionary efforts among the nominally Muslim populace.

Increasingly cornered in a punishing resistance to the recent Russian military offensive launched in August, local government leaders are reiterating their commitment to establishing independent Muslim states, built squarely on Islamic sharia law. However, they remain unable to stop the rampant anarchy in the region, where various warlords command their own large armed forces.

### Central Asia

#### *Back to KGB days*

At least three of the former Soviet republics of Central Asia continue to backpedal from their initial pledges to establish democratically guaranteed religious freedoms after they became independent in the early 1990s.

In the last year Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and more recently Azerbaijan, have taken more hard-line approaches through their government-controlled Committees of

Religious Affairs to squeeze out the small Protestant Christian communities, many of which include ministries among the ethnic Muslim majority population. By revising their laws, which require all religious groups to become officially registered, all three states have in effect made it almost impossible for these small groups to remain legal. However, the Muslim establishment and the Russian Orthodox Church were given legal status as the accepted religious communities in each nation.

Repeated police raids against Protestant churches during their regular worship services continue to intimidate church members and their pastors by interrogations, confiscating their Bibles and other Christian materials, pressuring employers to dismiss anyone caught in such a raid, and fining their leaders sizeable sums.

All three countries have concocted weak pretexts to imprison Christian pastors, either temporarily or for long sentences. In the face of an international outcry, Uzbekistan finally retracted stiff prison terms imposed upon four pastors convicted this past year on fabricated drug charges.

In an apparent show of apology, officials began to process these pastors' long-stalled church applications for official registration. But having grown up under the old Soviet system, local Christians are wary, knowing that in the coming months, new roadblocks could still be created to prevent their churches from becoming legal entities in their homeland.

### China

#### *Tightening the screws*

"If we (the Communist Party) give you prosperity in the economic realm, you must give up



group by providing it with financing or volunteers.

+ For perceived indifference to taking part in community service.

Violence between leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, narco-traffickers, Colombian army special forces and even satanic cults has pushed Colombia to the brink of anarchy. No group recognizes neutrality as an option in this 35-year-old war that demands every civilian to take sides. There's no hiding place within Colombia's borders, so refugees flee to neighboring countries and the United States.

In the hemisphere's most violent country, Colombia's Bellavista National Jail was its most violent prison until two believers brought the gospel to the prison in 1990 and stopped a riot. Hundreds of inmates — among them the nation's most notorious killers — committed themselves to Christ, and the prison's murder rate plummeted from sometimes 60 in a month to less than one a year.

Now a Bellavista Bible Institute thrives in the prison. Some graduates who completed their sentences have become full-time Christian workers in ministries such as halfway houses that enable other released Christian prisoners to make a transition to life outside Bellavista. Informal Bible studies abound in cellblocks once stained in graffiti written in victims' blood. Even as Colombia continues its downward spiral into violence and anarchy, Bellavista's revival serves as a case-in-point that the gospel can rescue this seemingly hopeless nation.

### Colombia

#### *Violence and chaos*

A recent gathering near Bogota of the National Evangelical Commission for Human Rights and Peace included a talk on why pastors are frequent targets of rival armed factions. A flyer cited reasons they're singled out for threats or murder by the country's warring groups. Here are some of those reasons:

+ For suspected infiltration.

+ For inflammatory language in sermons.

+ For working in human rights, for non-violence and the national peace movement.

+ For the economic prosperity of the church or pastor.

+ For relations with "gringos" — pastors perceived as U.S. CIA agents.

+ For disobeying orders from an armed group not to visit certain towns or not to hold services, or for refusing to collaborate with the

### India

#### *Extremism gaining momentum*

The resounding defeat of the Congress Party in the September-October elections allows the Hindu nationalist BJP a possible five-year term, which could be disastrous for India's 23 million Christians. To back up that assertion one need look no further than the 13-month reign of the BJP which ended in April 1999, during which a wave of over 140 acts of violence (including murders and church burnings) took place against Christians.

Though BJP leaders are careful to condemn anti-Christian violence, they ensure that the momentum of justice moves so slowly that Hindu extremists responsible will never be brought to book, thus effectively offering an amnesty to

## Whither the Church?



J. ALEX LANGLEY, DPP

**Muslims in Pakistan:** "Radical Muslim extremists in Pakistan continue to hold the nation's Christian minority hostage with the dreaded power of a single word: blasphemy."

anyone who harasses a Christian in the name of Hinduism.

Hindu nationalism is based on hatred of both Muslims and Christians, the two groups alleged to have no right to remain on the Gangetic plain. This ideology of hatred has triumphed in a vacuum, as the secularist position of Gandhi and Nehru has declined and India's Christians are too few to exert influence on a population that passed the one billion mark in August. This situation will surely continue, especially as Hindu extremists maintain that all the "tribal" Christians were forcibly converted. Attempts to coerce Christians back to Hinduism will cause the greatest flashpoint in the future.

### Indonesia

#### A vulnerable minority

Indonesia still remains a society lurching from upheaval to upheaval, and in the midst of this turbulence, the Christian community of some 20 million remains the most influential yet most vulnerable religious minority.

Whenever there is economic instability, Christians are made the scapegoats, and attacked. It is the Chinese Christian community that

bears the brunt of this, often with horrifying consequences. Half of Indonesia's six million Chinese are Christian, and they are, on the whole, very wealthy, which makes them a target for the outraged poor.

Also, the violence on East Timor has caused Christians to be stereotyped as separatists. A new, ugly nationalism is rearing its head. It charges that Christians want to separate from Indonesia wherever they live – obviously false, given that most Christians are thoroughly integrated throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

The island of Ambon in Maluku province was earmarked by extremist Muslims as a key domino, which, if tipped, would trigger *ji-had* throughout the land. Since January 1999, more than 500 Christians have been killed, and large parts of the island reduced to rubble in the strife.

The good news is the domino has not toppled, and most of the 90 per cent of Muslims in this country remain unattracted to extremist ideas. But with Megawati and Habibie – both revealing an alarming amount of political ineptitude – to contest the presidency at the end of the year, more instability seems inevitable.

### North Korea

#### The last Stalinist state

No one knows how many Christians are left in the world's last Stalinist state, but one thing is clear – life cannot be tougher for a church anywhere else in the world. North Korea is still in the grip of a severe famine that has cost an estimated 2 1/2 million lives, and is still stubbornly pursuing outdated centralized policies.

Kim Jong Il is hardly in the position to reverse course, for to do so would be to imply his father, Kim Il Sung, had been wrong. His regime plays a dangerous game of international brinkmanship, of forcing aid by threatening to make war on the South, making the Korean peninsula the place most likely to experience a nuclear exchange.

Christians may number as few as 10,000 or as many as 100,000 – most of them deep underground. They have no freedom to practice their faith in what is still the world's most atheistic state. The only good report is that the famine has made the border with China more porous, allowing more contact with Korean Christians in China. It's possible that the Korean Christian Federation – a fraudulent church for visiting Westerners – may be given an expanded role in order to tempt more Christian aid ministries into the country. But it is unlikely that genuine Korean Christians will "surface."

### Pakistan

#### Forgotten on death row

Radical Muslim extremists in Pakistan continue to hold the nation's Christian minority hostage with the dreaded power of a single word: *blasphemy*. Under the harsh statutes of the *blasphemy* laws, the mere accusation of *blasphemy* against a member of a non-Muslim minority subjects that person to police arrest and jailing without bail. Rarely does a magistrate review the allegations before the case is filed. But if convicted, the sentence is mandatory execution.

In the volatile environment of extremist Islam, such Christian prisoners typically remain under arrest for years on end, allegedly "for their own protection." Courts hearing their cases move sluggishly, and then only in attempts to transfer the proceedings to another court. With more than one lawyer and judge targeted by angry assassins for defending or acquitting Christians accused of *blasphemy*,

the judiciary are understandably nervous.

One such Pakistani Christian jailed three years ago has been on death row for the past year and a half, his appeal frozen by judges afraid to touch the controversial case. Even if Ayub Masih is fully acquitted, as evidence would seem to require, he will have to flee the country to escape the fanatics, who have vowed to kill him, regardless of what the courts decide.

With the overwhelming majority of Pakistan's Christians at the bottom of the social and economic scale, the average Christian faces the daily fear that some day he could end up in Ayub Masih's shoes.

### Saudi Arabia

#### Heartland of Islam

Despite bland assurances from the royal family to the contrary, Saudi Arabia's notorious *muttawa* (Islamic police) continue their obsession with harassing, arresting, imprisoning and deporting expatriate Christians who attempt to worship privately in the Kingdom. Government officials have insisted since 1997 that any "excesses" committed by these religious vigilantes against Christians contradict official state policy, claiming that private worship by non-Muslims is permitted.

But the evidence of recent months proves otherwise. In fact, individual foreigners are being arrested and jailed for months over alleged evidence that they participated in Christian worship. Raids of Christian worship services have landed their leaders in jail and led to eventual deportation, and congregational members have been forced to sign a promise to never again attend "illegal" meetings. Local authorities are expected to continue to justify such actions under Saudi's strict morality laws, which forbid mixing of the sexes in public gatherings.

Saudi authorities continue to try to quietly force employers to dismiss and send back to their homelands any employees found to be involved in Christian activities. Some are detained in the process, and many denied the financial benefits' package guaranteed in their job contracts.

A few may be tried formally in Islamic courts, which typically sentence religious offenders to painful lashes at the conclusion of their jail confinement. On the whole, Filipino Christians in Saudi Arabia bear the brunt of these

harsh measures, although the chance arrest of citizens of the more powerful Western nations can lead to exertion of greater diplomatic pressure on Saudi authorities. Fortunately, news of such arrests now circles the globe in the matter of a few hours, or at most, days, making it relatively impossible to hush up such incidents.

### Sudan

#### Doing a double-talk squeeze

The National Islamic Front (NIF) regime in Sudan has for some years been relentlessly pursuing its quasi-legal efforts to confiscate a growing number of long-established church properties in the capital of Khartoum and its twin-city, Omdurman. In a succession of ploys ranging from verbal and written threats to armed takeovers by militia or police forces, the government tries to bully the Catholic, Episcopal and Presbyterian churches out of lands, buildings and churches held by legal deeds for decades. In addition, dozens of small churches and church schools located in the massive shantytowns surrounding the capital continue to be razed to the ground under the pretext of city planning and zoning regulations.

Sudanese authorities still imprison and charge converts to Christianity with apostasy, a capital offense under the laws of Sudan. Although one such highly publicized prisoner was released by the Justice Ministry after he suffered a stroke in prison this year, another convert remains jailed, sentenced to four more years in prison on contrived charges.

The government has still to find a face-saving solution to the long-stalemated case concocted 15 months ago against two Catholic priests, one of whom is the influential chancellor of the Khartoum diocese. Although accused of masterminding a series of bombing explosions against the government, the two are believed to be bearing the brunt of Khartoum's displeasure over the Catholic Church's refusal to support the government's so-called peace plan with rebels in South Sudan.

Dominated by Muslim Arabs from the North, the Khartoum regime refuses to admit its complicity in the documented atrocities of genocide, starvation, slavery and forced Islamization in its fight to gain control over South Sudan, predominantly made up of Black Africans of Christian and tribal religions.

## Whither the Church?

# The Roadmap to reality

## An interview with Charles Colson

In the following interview with Jubilee Editor David Carlson, Chuck Colson talks about his new book, *How Now Shall We Live?* In the interview, and in the book, Colson lays out the challenge to the Church: Transform the culture by bringing Christian truth to bear on every aspect of life.

**JUBILEE:** Chuck, why this book on Christian worldview and why now?

**COLSON:** This book represents a culmination of a great deal of thought.

Since about 1985 I've been thinking more in worldview terms. We shortchange Christianity by making it simply a relationship with Jesus.

Christianity is much more than that. The Bible doesn't begin with John 3:16. To make John 3:16 the centerpiece of the biblical message is like opening a great novel in the middle. This has been a great limitation of the evangelical church.

**"It's a time for Christians ... to do a lot of soul searching about what the Christian role in the new millennium should be."**

Finally I've taken time to devote two and a half years of exhaustive effort to write a book that embraces what worldview is and how you begin to approach Christianity as a worldview. It's been a tremendous task.

The timing is providential in this sense: The book comes on the eve of the millennium. It's a time for Christians to celebrate 2,000 years since the birth of Christ; a time for us to do a lot of soul searching about what the Christian role in the new millennium should be. I would like to think this book could be a blueprint.

**How now should we live?** The answer is to live with Christianity as a biblical worldview and live it to its fullness in all areas of life. That is the clarion call for the new millennium.

**JUBILEE:** The book's title is reminiscent of Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?* Do you feel that you're following in Schaeffer's footsteps? How is your book different?

**COLSON:** Schaeffer wrote about the biblical basis of a



Charles (Chuck) Colson

nation to learn what we need to learn and to put that knowledge to work.

When I talk about issues such as apologetics — how we defend the faith with our secular neighbors — most people say, "Ah, that's such a heavy area. I'll leave that to you people who spend your time thinking about these things." Well, that's the surest way I can imagine for marginalizing Christianity. That is saying, "I can't be bothered to learn what Christianity has to say about economics, the workplace, science, art. It's too much work for me." That is slothfulness (one of the seven deadly sins).

If we think that way, we're missing the richest blessings God has for us. I'll use an example from the book. I have a tin ear when it comes to music. If I hear a melody I like, I enjoy it, but I don't know why I enjoy it. I did not really appreciate music until I realized that Christianity has a great deal to say about music and art and Beauty with a capital B. And then I appreciated things far more deeply, because I could see God's hand in them. I saw great music as God's handiwork — something done to His glory.

So we live with this rich Christian heritage; yet, we don't appreciate it or understand it. Too often we simply say Christianity is good for me; it's helped my family; I'm living happily; I know I'm saved and going to heaven; and that's all I need to know. No — that's not all you need to know. Number one: You can't defend your faith. Number two: You can't live in a rational way in the world without understanding God's created physical and moral order for the universe.

This is part of the process of sanctification. As you grow in the faith, you become increasingly aware of how Christianity relates to all of life. And you learn how to live it well.

**JUBILEE:** You and Nancy Pearcey write that the goal for *How Now Shall We Live?* is this: "to equip believers to be nothing less than God's agents in building a new Christian culture." How would you respond to someone who might accuse you of promoting a Christian utopianism?

**COLSON:** We're not touting utopianism, because we don't believe that the kingdom of God is going to be brought in by human means — not even by all the best ef-

orts of Christians to bring Christian truth to society and to influence culture. So I hope nobody gets that impression from the book. We're not talking about Christian triumphalism. We are talking about bringing Christian truth to bear on all areas of life.

Utopianism — as we defined it in the book — is the belief that human beings can create structures of society that will enable us in our innate goodness to live perfect lives. That's the perfect prescription for tyranny. We're not giving the Christian flipside of that. We're saying this is a holding action until Christ returns. Our job is to make the culture around us reflect His righteousness and goodness as much as possible until the day of Christ's triumphant return.

**JUBILEE:** You agree with C. S. Lewis that the chief opposing worldview to Christianity is . . .

**COLSON:** Lewis says naturalism. It goes under several different names, but, yes, the chief competing system to Christianity is naturalism, which says there is a naturalistic explanation for all things, including the existence of human beings. Billions of years ago light rays happened to refract at a certain angle, a couple of molecules spun off amino acids, they were both left-handed, they joined to form one protein cell, and, presto, eight billion years later through all these chance mutations, here we sit.

But that is an utterly preposterous proposition, because it is self-defeating. If I am an ardent believer in a naturalistic explanation for everything, then I have to say the brains that give me the capacity to make that claim are the result of a chance collision of atoms. How can I trust the brains that have caused me to say naturalism is true? I have no way of depending on my own conclusions. It is known as materialistic nihilism. As Schaeffer put it, the modern man who believes this has both feet planted firmly in midair.

**JUBILEE:** What then are the consequences of this worldview?

**COLSON:** Ultimately people who believe in naturalism say that the universe is all that is or all that ever will be. You end up worshiping the universe, which is exactly what the New Age movement does. And you end up reducing human beings to something no greater than the value of that tree outside. All human dignity is lost.

Take any naturalistic presupposition to its logical conclusion and it results in something you can't live with. And that's the trouble with naturalism — it destroys itself.

Christians have to know enough about these issues to be able to stick a pin in that balloon. But Christians don't think enough about it to deflate that argument when it comes up with their secular friends.

**JUBILEE:** If the principal opposing worldview to Christianity is naturalism, what about other supernaturalist worldviews, such as Islam, that can be hostile to Christianity?

**COLSON:** On the question of naturalism versus supernaturalism, Muslims share the conviction with us that existence can't be explained naturalistically. Of course their revelation and their understanding of salvation are very different from ours. The Christian worldview alone offers the expla-

*"If you compare worldviews, you'll find that only Christianity provides a sustainable, rational view of life."*

nation of the human dilemma. Alone. I emphasize that.

Nothing else provides the way out of the human dilemma other than the Christian Gospel.

There's one thing I hope readers get out of this book: If you compare worldviews (Marxism, evolutionary biology, postmodernism, existentialism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity), you'll find that only Christianity provides a sustainable, rational view of life. It provides the only explanation of reality that conforms to the way things are, that provides human dignity, that provides an explanation of where we're going and the purpose we have in life.

Peter says be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within you but always with gentleness and reverence. I hope this is a point we make in the book well enough: we must always proclaim the truth with love. We never lord it over others. We are saddened for the world when the world can't see the truth. We use a lot of stories in this book that make it clear that Christians ought not to be triumphalist about what they believe. They

ought to be patient, gentle toward those who don't have eyes to see or ears to hear.

**JUBILEE:** In the last quarter of the book, you deal with law, criminal justice, education, film, television, music, art, business — all areas that in twentieth-century America are thoroughly dominated by secularists and the forces of naturalism. What is it going to take for Christians to have a significant impact in all these areas?

**COLSON:** One story we tell in the book is how the Irish saved civilization. It goes back to the Dark Ages when Christianity had been driven off the mainland of Europe by the barbarians. The Irish monks preserved great literature, learning from the Greeks, philosophy, music.

They drained swamps, built schools — they were little outposts of civilization.

As the barbarian hold on Europe weakened, the monks sent missionaries out to Scotland and then to the continent, and they re-Christianized Europe. What we have to do — and I use this term advisedly — is re-Christianize the culture. Re-Christianize in the sense of being salt and light and bringing Christian truth back into a

dominant role in the culture.

I'm not talking about taking over society or violating the separation between church and state. Christianity, biblical truth, was always the undergirding of our moral consensus in Western civilization. Law, education, music, the arts, every area of life ought to be undergirded by Christian truth;

### **"I believe despair is a sin because it denies the sovereignty of God. We know the final outcome."**

that will happen only as we — like the monks — preserve Christianity and bring it back to the mainstream of culture.

My great hope for this book is that it will become a buzz within Christian circles, that people will begin to say we've got to start thinking about worldview. And there's evidence so far that that's happening. Everybody who has read a draft of the book says, "Wow, we've been waiting for a book like this."

And I'm hoping the big topic for the evangelical world and the conservative Roman Catholic world in the beginning of the new

millennium will be worldview. I want to see people thinking of Christianity as a life system, as a way of understanding all reality.

I see this as an opportunity for the Church to retake the structures of our society, not by a heavy-handed moralistic crusade, not by political action, but by Christians living their faith and understanding their faith, their minds transformed.

Put it this way: the Church can go one of two ways in the new millennium. It can become very seeker-sensitive, recruit people and help them weather the storms of life, give them basic survival tools: go to church on Sunday morning, go to your Bible study worship, and somehow get along with life, as the world decays around you. Or we can decide that we want to be like those Irish monks and take Christian truths into every area of life until we make a difference for Christ and see the culture transformed. I want to see this book become an agent whereby God's people will transform the culture around them.

**JUBILEE:** You and Nancy paint a horrifying picture of the consequences of societies embracing false worldviews. Why is this book so thoroughly optimistic?

**COLSON:** Because I believe in the sovereignty of God. And I believe despair is a sin because it denies the sovereignty of God. We know the final outcome. We know what the last page of the Bible says. We know where the whole human drama is going to end. Our job is to man the fortresses during whatever battle is being waged, wherever we are. And we should always do so hopefully, because we know the final outcome.

I think we are at a unique moment in history: Secular naturalism is about to implode, because people have finally gotten what they wanted — and discovered they can't live with it. All the cultural indicators are shifting our way. I think you're going to see what John Paul II has called a great springtime of harvest. Here's an 80-year-old pontiff who is optimistic about the coming millennium, because he sees that modern man and woman can't survive the nihilism created by their finally having achieved their long-desired autonomy. So I say approach the new millennium with great hope and expectation.

**JUBILEE:** Has this been the most difficult book you've worked on?

**COLSON:** Without question.

Nancy and I had to take complex topics and present them in a way that the typical Colson book reader would be able to understand and then use as an apologetic tool. I hope they will have it by their desks at home, or on their kitchen tables. Maybe they'll read something in the paper and say, "Wait a minute, I read in the book that this is how Christians think about this." Or when someone comes up with some harebrained economic plan, people will say, "That doesn't square with what the Bible says about economics."

Certainly I had to research and read and study more than I had done for any other book. But I've learned more in the process of preparing this than I could have imagined. It's been like taking a course in philosophy and history and science all at once.

The section on salvation in itself is worth the price of the book, because it shows that no other religion or worldview offers an answer to the human dilemma. If people read just that section and understand it, I will consider our efforts well rewarded.

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## Best introduction to a Christian worldview

### Gideon Strauss

Colson and Pearcey's *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1999. ISBN 0-8423-1808-9) is the best introduction to a Christian worldview now available. The book's dustcover proclaims its message: "True Christianity goes far beyond John 3: 16 — beyond private faith and personal salvation. It is nothing less than a framework for understanding all of reality. It is a worldview."

While I can think of quite a few Christian college professors who would benefit from reading this book, it doesn't take a PhD to understand it. It is full of gripping personal stories, animated discussion of the important issues of our day and informed reports on the crucial debates shaping society.

Taking an approach that reminds one of C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, Colson and Pearcey strip the cosmetics off the "culture wars" now being waged in North America. Too often we stare ourselves blind against the day-to-day

conflicts of conservatives and liberals, prudes and libertines, traditionalists and diverse "lifestyle lobbyists," pro-lifers and pro-choicers. Underneath these surface conflicts boils the ultimate conflict over what really matters: How do we understand the whole of reality? and how should we live as a consequence? This conflict is a spiritual clash between fundamentally divergent worldviews.

According to Colson and Pearcey, the main contenders in this current spiritual clash are naturalism and theism. They define naturalism as the belief that natural causes are sufficient to explain everything that exists, while theism is the belief that there is a transcendent God who created the universe.

Now, if you are very familiar with Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, whom Colson and Pearcey quote more than any other author, you might complain that this distinction between naturalism and theism is in-

adequate. I would agree. But Colson and Pearcey do not dumb-down their analysis; they reduce it to bare essentials.

You might also find *How Now* far too enthusiastic in its emphasis on human reason. Again I would agree. But Colson and Pearcey are quite overtly trying out a "big tent" strategy. They want to be able to rally to the cause of a Christian worldview, described in Kuyperian terms, all kinds of Christians, including, for instance, aficionados of both Natural Law and Common Grace approaches. Time will tell whether this strategy is wise.

Colson and Pearcey write for North American Christians. Their book is intended to persuade their readers that Scripture must be the basis for all of life, that Christianity is a total life system. This, they believe, will enable us to make sense of the world we live in, and to order our lives accordingly.

Secondly, it will equip us to understand present-day forces hostile

to the Christian faith, and therefore to evangelize more wisely, and to make the case for Christian truth as God's instrument for transforming this culture.

*How Now* begins by explaining that worldviews matter, and why. "Where did we come from, and who are we?" is answered in biblical revelation with the explanation that we have our origins in God's Creation of the universe and human life. "What has gone wrong with the world?" is answered in biblical revelation with the explanation that God's good creation has been marred by the Fall of humanity into sin. "What can we do to fix it?" is answered in biblical revelation with the explanation that we cannot fix it, but need help, and that God has provided such help in the form of redemption through Christ.

In the final section, Colson and Pearcey build on their worldview analysis to draw the outlines of a Christian agenda for restoration or cultural renewal.

Some CC readers, grown weary with seeing their own dreams of cultural renewal gone awry, might find the tone of this section of the book a little triumphalistic. I suggest, to the contrary, that this program is merely courageous and hopeful, modest and shrewd. It builds on 20 centuries of Christian engagement with Western culture, it takes into account the present state of affairs and demands careful thought and hard work. And, like all human efforts, it will not always go the way people intended. But that should not dissuade any of us from the call issued by this book.

Though incorporating Kuyper's thought, *How Now Shall We Live?* is immediate to our own situation, and addresses us in terms of our own issues and challenges at the end of another century.

*Gideon Strauss is director of research and education for the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) based in Mississauga, Ontario.*

Theme: Whither the Church?

# WORLDVIEWS: on old clothes and dressing up

## Harry der Nederlanden

For most subscribers to CC, Christian worldview talk is as familiar as that favorite old jacket that Frank De Vries wrote about in CC a few issues ago. We pull it on whenever we need it; it is stained on the collar and frayed at the cuffs; but it's comfortable, and we assume it's going to last forever. Then, as with Frank, one day our kids tell us that we no longer look decent; we're becoming something of an embarrassment going out in public wearing a seedy, old-fashioned jacket like that.

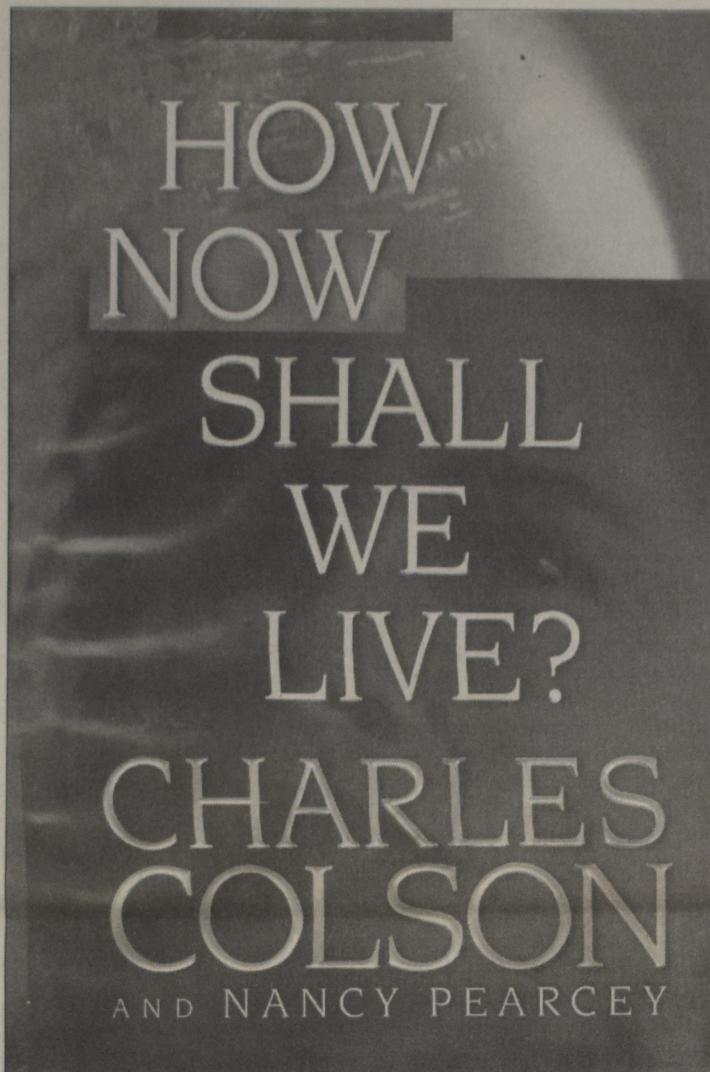
Yes, Christian worldview is an old jacket that we've begun to take for granted; in fact, some of us suspect that it may be a bit malodorous. It may be causing people to shun us. Some of us have been holding our worldview up to very critical scrutiny, examining the stains, the wear and tear, the splitting seams, and wondering whether to do a little shopping around....

Some of us have perhaps even pared down to essentials. Like many evangelicals, we've decided it's alright to go around in our underwear, putting on our faith only where it comes in intimate contact with our person – in our devotional life and our morals. Any Christian gripped by the prophets' vision of a new heaven and a new earth and by the example of the early church, to say nothing of the example of Jesus himself, will have felt this vomit reflex to the secular, materialistic culture of our time.

This vision can prompt such a radical rejection of the earthly city that we adopt what is basically an ascetic attitude. We say No! to much of our culture, and disengage from it – inwardly. We repudiate its materialistic spirit, but we continue to use its products, where they don't violate our sensibility.

## Regrouping after the retreat

Charles Colson, in his latest book, *How Now Shall We Live*, (co-authored by Nancy Pearcey) rejects this option very decisively. We are abandoning the public sphere to secularism, he argues, precisely at a time when people are searching desperately for more spiritual answers. The position that he embraces enthusiastically is a Kuyperian one. He mixes concrete example with analysis and theory to outline a transforming vision that is both ambitious and readable. It is critical of contemporary ways of envisioning our human task of shaping our society, government, and entire culture with-



out tossing out the whole garment. It is a vision, I'm sure, that most readers of CC will share. To read *How Now* will be for most of us a confirming, inspiring, deepening and encouraging experience. It is a book to renew our resolve and to quicken new hope.

A biblical, transforming vision must embody a double hermeneutic, two moments of interpretation, one negative and one positive. It must provide a critical distance from the idolatries of our culture, and it must also receive this inheritance with charity. Richard Mouw describes the need for these two moments well in *Consulting the Faithful*. *How Now* does this "consulting" in an exemplary fashion.

It rejects any attempt to impose transformations "from the top down." Renewing our society must proceed by way of persuasion. Christian transformation begins with changed persons. This means that all Christians must engage in *apologetics*, that is, in giving an articulate, well thought-out defence of the Christian alternative. This defence must be developed in a way appropriate to every area of the human enterprise. One can be, for instance, a Christian missionary to the field of

molecular biology. *How Now* is strong in developing the outlines of such an apologetic in the areas of science and politics, especially in terms of origins, cosmic and human. In the area of the arts and media, it is very sketchy to say the least. But it is already a long and ambitious book: it's no surprise that its reach exceeds its grasp.

## Clothes fit for a Kingdom

All in all, Colson does an admirable job dressing us up in clothes fit for a Kingdom. This virtue is also what raises some apprehensions in me.

The strongest, most well-developed parts of the book are those in which Colson takes on naturalism (the belief that there's nothing beyond the cosmos) as a teaching about the origins of the universe and humankind (evolutionism) and as a teaching about the origins of social and political order (utopianism).

In both cases, he develops an intellectual defense, an apologetics, that seeks to demonstrate by rational argument that the Christian understanding of the origin and structure of the cosmos and of the nature of humanity and society are more reasonable, more coherent

than those stemming from Darwin and Rousseau.

I single out this aspect of Colson and Pearcey's presentation of worldview because it does not figure very prominently, I believe, in our minds. We tend to undertake our Christian duty in various areas of life not because we think this way is superior or more rationally coherent, but because our faith dictates that we should conduct our affairs in accordance with God's Word. In many cases we suspect that unbelief may in fact be able to make a better rational case than Christianity.

We follow the way of Scripture not because we can demonstrate empirically that it works better or rationally that it makes better sense, but because we believe that God blesses obedience. *How Now* proceeds from the assumption that the Christian understanding is more rationally consistent and that the Christian way is more effective and realistic than naturalistic, evolutionary and utopian ways.

## Advancing in a Sherman tank

I am of two minds about this approach. There are times, I am convinced, that the Christian thing to do does not appear to be the most reasonable course of action. Life is hugely complex, and the human mind cannot encompass it all and render it transparent to reason. In most cases, we must act on the basis of incomplete information and with only a vague grasp of all the factors involved.

This is one of the reasons faith and principles are indispensable not just for Christians but for everyone. We live and act with partial understanding in a world of confusion and of darkness. We do, however, have a source of illumination. We believe that to act by that light makes good sense ultimately, but we are by no means always able to see how it all adds up. We can only confess that it does.

Nevertheless, I do appreciate getting some signs of confirmation and some evidences supporting, for example, the Christian view of origins. And there's no need to ignore those signs, as long as we're clear about their status.

I'm afraid that parts of Colson and Pearcey's book encourage Christians to attempt to construct a worldview along the model of a fortress (or a Sherman tank), that is, as something so solid and impervious that it can protect us against all incoming fire. A worldview that seeks only the high ground is one that finds it hard to admit error and to repent. It will inevitably become arrogant. Any

worldview that wishes to call itself Christian must provide for a process of continual conversion; it cannot identify itself so closely with the standard that it cannot confess that it is itself always also part of the problem.

Just as the Christian and the Christian community is criss-crossed by all sorts of error and sin, so any Christian worldview is also adulterated. At times one may get the impression from *How Now* that the Antithesis runs between one group of people with their



*How Now Shall We Live*  
co-author Nancy Pearcey

worldview and the rest with a different worldview. This would be almost to identify the "culture war" with the Antithesis. The battle between good and evil, however, does not obey party lines; it takes place in the hearts, minds and lives of believers too.

I believe Colson is not unaware of this. When I think of what he has achieved with his prison ministry I am almost tempted to recant my criticism, for it surely serves as a fine model for cultural transformation. A similar thing can be said about work he describes to transform impoverished, crime-infested neighborhoods. Clearly, such work requires a fundamental change in outlook and attitude on the part of good, solid, middle-class Christians too.

*How Now* soundly excoriates the utopian and postmodern traditions. For good reasons. Both ignore some basic realities. The first, the finite, fallen nature of humanity; the second, the created order of natural and historical reality. Nevertheless, Christians can learn something from both heretical traditions: from the first, the deep longing in the human soul for a social order characterized by righteousness and *shalom*; and from the second, the need to see all our works, even our highest achievements, as tainted by sin.

*Continued on page 15...*

## News Feature

# Residence rules a sore point for Jerusalem Christians

... continued from page 2

territory have the right to live in the place where they were born?

All Christians we talked to want Jerusalem to have some form of international supervision. They want the "rule of six" — "one city, two capitals, three religions." It is a nice formula, but difficult to imagine in a space where the use of every square metre of space is a struggle.

The Christian population of Jerusalem has declined to less than 12,000, from a high of 24,000 a few decades ago. Still, they hold some wonderful space within the old city walls. As we walked down narrow lanes looking at small crammed shops, we ducked in doorways where the patriarchs have residences, the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox and the Latin Patriarchate (Roman Catholic).

## Treasuring the trappings

In each case, we were ushered into spacious, sumptuous reception halls, rich with art and furniture, and inhabited by staffs of priests and monks, each with robes and dress marking status, at least to an informed eye. My own Protestant eyes, used to barer, simpler architectural lines and clothing, were a bit dazzled, and I had to be told who was who.

Still, even I could distinguish a young cleric just learning his job (*his* because few or no women were in evidence) from an aging one decked out with the symbols of office. But would they give any of

that up to provide a balance between the three religions? Not easily, I think.

Certainly, the Jews have the least religious presence in the old city; they use primarily only the western wall for religious exercises. Of course, outside the walls, the Jewish presence grows continually, while the government forces the Palestinians to retreat.

"Settlements are a cancer on the land," the Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan told us. Israel's new Prime Minister Barak has earned some good press from tearing down a settlement, which amounted to about four trailers (mobile homes). Meanwhile, he has begun or completed over 400 housing units in other settlements, more than his predecessor Netanyahu built during his entire term in office. Moreover, the building of settlements is not due to population pressure, but is a political decision, the Christians believe. Palestinian Christians told us they estimated about one-fourth of all housing in the settlements is unoccupied (government figures show less than 10 per cent unoccupied).

## Not so subtle manipulation

Residence is another sore point. Bishop Munib was born in Jerusalem. However, when Israel occupied Jerusalem in 1967, the government gave him a residence card. He became a resident alien. If he decides to live anywhere else for more than two years, he cannot return to Jerusalem. And there are other reasons for taking his resi-



RICHARD VAN HOUTEN

International Christian leaders gather in a Jerusalem church.

dence permit away. Under such a policy, the government is slowly changing the demographics of Jerusalem. Should there be some plebiscite in the future, the Jews will outnumber all others.

Of course, these are the misfortunes of war. It is unjust, but so has been the constant war exerted against Israel over the last 50 years. It is a good principle that people have the right to live where they were born, but Israel is not alone in redefining those rights in a conquered territory. What is needed is a negotiated peace, a peace that addresses the fundamental concerns and creates space and security for the residents of the land.

Several church leaders called

the church of Jerusalem the "Mother Church." It was indeed the first church, and they played on this to win our sympathy. Our visiting group was very mixed, from Salvation Army and Seventh Day Adventists to Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Anglicans. The Protestants among us seemed a little out of place. Most of us are not used to thinking of a "mother church." We usually trace our beginnings as churches to more recent events.

Of the 13 official churches, six are Catholic, five are Orthodox, leaving the Anglicans and Lutherans to represent the rest. One Catholic spokesperson, when he was asked about the place of evangelicals, arrogantly told our group

that they should all join one of the 13 official churches, "official" because they are recognized by the Israeli government. He got a rather bristly reaction in return.

## Standing by our siblings

Why, I wondered later, did not the six Catholic churches join together, if there were too many churches? From my viewpoint they are churches with different liturgies based on their differing ethnicity, and all swear allegiance to the Pope. And let the Orthodox join together, too, I thought, or combine into just two (Oriental and Eastern). So I found we also do not give up our turf too quickly.

The local definition of "mother church" may be foreign to many of us. Still, we need to make some room in our hearts for support of these Christians. Even though I think that the church buildings here are excessive, and sometimes obscure the first century realities rather than highlight them, I believe that most first-time visitors would agree that a visit to this part of the world changes the way we read the Bible. We should not lose the possibility of that experience.

On balance, the week in Israel was more about the unity of the church than about its disunity. Some signs are encouraging, and the "Mother Church" should have our support. As we said to these Israeli Christians: "We came to stand beside you." We hope that Barnabas, the encourager, watching from heaven, would approve.

## WORLDVIEWS: on old clothes and dressing up

... continued from page 14

and selfishness.

*How Now* is one-sided in this respect. It does draw on the classical tradition, with its belief in a transcendent (rational) order or natural law, to counter utopianism and postmodernism, but almost demonizes the latter. Colson and Pearcey's Christian worldview, to my mind, remains a little too closely associated with a solid Republican outlook on many issues — Christianized and expanded to be sure, but closely associated with the American Way of Life articulated in the '50s and before.

It is good that some so-called "middle-class" values like marriage, family and the Protestant work ethic are rescued from their vilification by the left. However, many elements of the welfare sys-

tem arose from a noble desire to protect workers and the poor against the worst effects of our individualistic free enterprise, not primarily out of a utopian ambition to create a "perfect" society.

We can disagree about matters of emphasis, however, without losing sight of the biblical unity of spirit that we share with Colson and Pearcey. *How Now* is a book that I will certainly keep on my desk as we at *Christian Courier* keep wrestling with that liberating calling and humbling task that Scripture puts before the people of God. And we will keep reminding ourselves that it is God himself who wants to dress us from head to foot, from soul to civilization in his righteousness. For my taste, however, *How Now* needs to shuck the suit and tie.

## TIME FOR NEW FURNITURE?

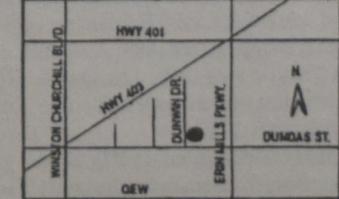
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## Development in Central America

# HONDURAS: Out from the 'depths'

Stories and photographs by Marian Van Til

*Managing editor Marian Van Til traveled to Honduras in October 1999 as part of a four-country visit partially funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The purpose of the trip was to observe the development the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is doing in Central and South America and to make CC's audience, and eventually a wider audience, more aware of such work and what it involves. This is the third in a four-part series.*

## A brief history: Haggling over a 'banana republic'



*A new concrete path, built with CRWRC support, seems to disappear into Tegucigalpa below.*

Honduran history goes back to at least 1000 BC and evidence of Mayan civilization – settlements which mysteriously disappeared about AD 900. Six hundred years later (1502), Columbus first set foot at Trujillo (pronounced tru-hee-yo) in northern Honduras. He named the country – after the deep water off the Caribbean coast ("honduras" means "depths").

Honduras's history is one of conquest, conflict and occupation. The Spanish settled in Trujillo in 1525, establishing a central capital in 1537 at Comayagua. This remained the religious and political centre of the country during the next 350 years until Tegucigalpa became the capital in 1880.

### Spanish, Dutch, British bingo

The Spanish were not the only early occupiers of Honduras. The Dutch and British got in on the act. When gold was discovered near Tegucigalpa in 1570, it attracted both Dutch and British pirates to the area. By 1600, the Spanish estimated there were 5000 British buccaneers living in Roatan. And in 1643 Trujillo was sacked by Dutch pirates and not resettled by the Spanish until 1787.

Spain concentrated its efforts in the interior, the British on the coast (where mahogany grew). The British established a lucrative mahogany trade with the help West Indian slaves they brought

over. Britain set up a protectorate over the entire coastal region from Honduras to Nicaragua, which lasted until 1859 when the area was relinquished to Honduras.

Meanwhile, independence from Spain had been granted in 1821. Like El Salvador, Honduras then briefly became part of Mexico, and then of the Central American Federation. Honduras declared independence in 1838. Since then, power has alternated between various political factions and military regimes, with literally hundreds of short-lived coups.

In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, three American fruit companies (Standard, Cuyamel and United Fruit) bought thousands of acres of north coastal land cheaply and eventually owned 75 per cent of all Honduran banana groves. Bananas accounted for 66 per cent of Honduran exports in 1913, which made these companies powerful players in Honduran politics.

### Factions, fighting and a hurricane

In 1969 Honduras and El Salvador fought a 100-hour skirmish (the Soccer War) over El Salvador's allegation that Honduras was mistreating Salvadoran immigrants. During the 1980s Honduras was surrounded by the turmoil going on next door in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, and became a haven for Nicaragua's "Contras," who were supported by

the U.S. The U.S. saw Honduras as the linchpin to its South American policy, and U.S. military and other aid poured into Honduras. Eventually, public protests, political instability and exposure of the Iran-Contra scandal resulted in Honduras's refusal to sign a new military agreement with the U.S., and in the ordering of the Contras to leave.

Honduras's subsequent problems have been largely economic: falling exports, a growing national debt and a shrinking GNP. In 1997 the centre-right Liberal Party candidate Carlos Flores Facusse was elected president.

The country is gradually trying to build an adequate infrastructure, but progress has been slow. Hurricane Mitch hit in November 1998 wreaking massive destruction through extensive flooding and the burying of towns, roads, bridges and homes in mud. The hurricane aftermath brought thousands of international aid workers to the country, and shifted the focus of many development agencies toward home-building, including the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

Mitch's wrath is still evident, as I saw in disparate parts of Tegucigalpa. Despite government promises of aid and new housing, hundreds of Hondurans are still living in the refugee compounds built right after the hurricane.

CRWRC's Don Miedema says a stalemate has arisen. The government is hoping that the foreign aid and development agencies will step in and "solve" the problem – as they have done in the past two years by providing new housing for thousands of peasants who were left homeless. But these agencies don't want to be "used" by the government, so they are reluctant to do work the government has promised to do. The situation in Honduras is complex, the solutions not easily arrived at – a constant refrain in this part of the world.

## CRWRC in Honduras

### Ven a Servir: 'Come and Serve'

CRWRC has an effective four-pronged ministry in Honduras. Its indigenous partners are Solitas, Ven A Servir, CORCRIDE, and the national diaconate of the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras.

As soon as CRWRC head staffer Don Miedema met me at the Tegucigalpa airport we began a bumpy drive up the mountainside to the outskirts of the city. The summit provided a magnificent view of the city stretched below. But my purpose here was to see the new housing which funds from CRWRC, via Ven a Servir, had built since Hurricane Mitch a year-and-a-half ago. The winds and torrential rains had rushed down this mountainside, flattening, flooding and covering with red mud nearly everything unfortunate enough to be in the way.

The new brick houses are impressive – as is a new church. Most of the houses are bigger (and far better) than the mud and stick dwellings they replaced. The mountainside is steep; thousands of small houses seem to perch on it precariously, accessible by steep foot paths. Ven a Servir also built a concrete path running vertically down what had been a wash-out dirt path – a huge help in negotiating the mountainside.

### One active church

The church is a non-denominational, evangelical congregation which essentially is Ven a Servir, which means "Come and serve." The congregation had a falling-out with its conservative denomination over its involvement in social action, diaconal work and justice issues. So when it was looking for support for its diaconal and credit program, Christian education and reconstructing housing, CRWRC "came along side them," as Don Miedema likes to say, as one of their sources of funding, counsel and support to enable them to live their faith in this impoverished area of the capital city.

The church building – one large room without pews, and a kitchen and storage area at the back – was a convenient place to meet and talk with five Ven a Servir leaders: Angel Magia, the pastor and director and president of the board; Jose Cardona, a businessman and member at large; and Magda Moncava, a homemaker and leader of one of the community groups; Irene Andino, treasurer; and Irene Torres, vice-all.

### A little goes a long way

Pastor Magia explained that their diaconal work consists of "social and spiritual activities," "trying to develop leaders, pastors, and to evangelize in the local area" and leadership and marriage workshops. The loans/credit program offers both "financial support and encouragement of 'micro-enterprise,' to help low-income people," Magia said. For example, small loans – geared to individuals' needs and ability to pay back – allow people to start businesses such as shoemaking and repair, sewing, carpentry, corner stores, a brick-making operation.

CRWRC helps with the credit program, of which 371 people are currently beneficiaries, either individually or in groups; the loans range from \$100 to \$1000 (Cdn). This works through the setting up a tiny community banks – 23 of them here – each with about eight members.

The church also runs a "technical school" and an elementary school with 145 students, and 55 children in daycare. The technical school teaches such skills as sewing, hairdressing, computing. Many Honduran children have dropped out of the country's public schools; most kids go to church-run schools, many of them Catholic, where they get a better education and actually pay.

The Ven a Servir leaders are enthusiastic about being involved in so many aspects of Christian service. "Whatever I do, I do for the Lord," said Irene Torres. Irene Andino added, "We feel led by God and want the community to get ahead. We want to see progress."

Jose Cardona, the businessman, concurs. He is in a position to give not only advice and managerial skill, but financial support. He spends most of his time now in volunteer work with Ven a Servir and Habitat for Humanity – with whom Ven a Servir also works.

CRWRC provides some of the money for the new housing, work groups (they've built 40 houses in this area so far and are building many more), and a supervisor who makes sure they get built according to agreed upon specifications. The hurricane shifted CRWRC's focus somewhat here. Some of the new housing is being provided outright (given, without obligation, to people) – which comes under "aid" rather than "development," and CRWRC is now primarily involved in the latter (see introduction to this series, CC, Dec. 13).

Reverting to "aid" bothers Don Miedema somewhat, but this is an unusual circumstance. The agency is careful about how it spends its – and CIDA's – money, and about not returning to a situation which fosters dependency among the indigenous peoples.

## Development in Central America

# Solitas

## Helping women help themselves



Members of Solitas testify to the great help Solitas has given.

We were late getting back to the city. Three Hondurans and I had been in the mountains a couple of hours outside of Tegucigalpa. A bridge was out over a wide, fast-flowing river and we had to be taxied to the other side in a flat-bottomed skiff; then we had difficulty getting a "bus" (a 12-passenger van which is "full" when 18 or so people are on board). In the city we were to meet at the market, on the second floor of a huge, tin-roofed Quonset-hut type building.

There, around a long table sat a dozen women who are part of Solitas, an organization which has become life-blood for its members — single women, mostly mothers — who must find ways to support themselves. The women very graciously accepted our apology — we were to have lunch together, and it

was long past lunchtime. But soon the flower-decked table was laden with good, hot food and the ubiquitous Pepsi and Coke bottles.

After lunch about 20 more women joined us and we moved to a circle of chairs. The director told us that Solitas has organized women in three of the markets here, giving them credit or loans for micro-enterprises, or to get new housing.

In the combined market zones in Tegucigalpa, Solitas works with 936 women. The goal is to support a thousand women in the capital.

I asked what sort of businesses the women own. A number of them sell food: hot meals or fruits, grains, soup, snacks, live birds and eggs (chickens and turkeys), and leaves for making tamales. Others sell natural fruit juices, herbs and medicinal plants, flowers, clay

items, cloth, clothing of various kinds, cosmetics.

CRWRC is one of several of Solitas's financial partners. The director of Solitas told the gathering that 296 women are currently receiving credit and 177 more will get it soon. Among those, 18 will receive houses and eight already have; more were being built

The women gradually pay for their homes through the money they make via their businesses. "The housing project has been a strength for the other programs we manage," the director said. "The money that will come back will help a great deal. We're in demand in all the zones; with higher demand, we need more support."

### More than money

While that may have been a veiled appeal to CRWRC for a higher level of support, it was clear that CRWRC's assistance is appreciated. The president of Solitas, a lawyer, asserted that CRWRC is the most involved of all the organizations which support them. "They come out to help us," he said. And Solitas's support is given in such a way that "if Solitas no longer exists, these beneficiary community groups will still be here."

A number of the Solitas women confirmed that. One said: "They haven't just lent us money; they've taught us how to work in groups, what to do with our money, how to reinvest, how to get more materials." She said, "People want to join our organization because of the

success that we're having."

But Solitas has brought more important values as well. "They have taught us that we can't always be working, but we must also be happy," the woman continued. Then she laugh: "Magda [a Solitas promoter] even invited us to the movies."

Another woman, Irene, told us: "I received a house. My house was destroyed, and it belonged to the father of my [five] children; he's a drunk. They told me they'd help build me a house. I thought they were lying. No one has ever helped me like that. I can hardly believe

it's real. God heard my prayers," she, tears in her eyes. She will "pay off the house little by little."

Whether the women received a house or business help, each agreed that Solitas and CRWRC had changed her life, given her hope that she and her children would not live the rest of their lives with never enough of anything. One Solitas member, also the recipient of a house, summed up the feelings of many: "I prayed to God to help me, but I didn't think he'd answer me [in the way I wanted]. But he did. I say thanks to God, one and a thousand times."

## Deacons cover all the bases

### The community at Mont de Leon



Housing of the Honduran poor: before and after Hurricane Mitch

kitchens will be added in January when the rains stop, I was told.

Diakonia has helped these farming families improve their crops too. They raise corn, beans, soybeans and yucca and sell it when they have a chance to San Francisco, a village "three minutes away driving, 25 minutes away walking," said Hector Escalante, a Diakonia member who headed the group here. Diakonia and CRWRC's involvement in Mont de Leon began in 1995 when a family group asked for a loan after they found out about CRWRC, he explained.

Diakonia also helped the community with education, medicine and clothing. "And when we had nothing, Diakonia provided food," Escalante added.

Irene de Murillo, an indigenous CRWRC staffer, was the first director of Diakonia; four years ago she began working for CRWRC. She explained that Diakonia works in three departments (provinces/states) of the country: Olancho, Colom, and Francisco Moracan. In Olancho there are 32 communities with CRCs.

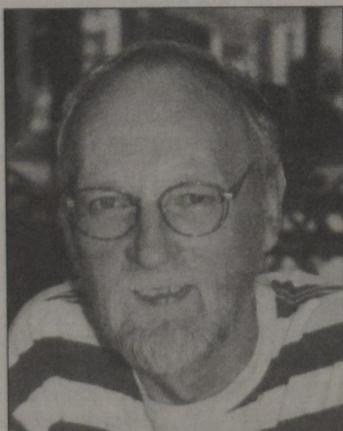
Diakonia was founded in 1986 as the social arm of the Christian Reformed Church in Honduras. "We pay for the work of the church in the communities," explained Escalante.

## CRWRC's other partners

Beside Ven a Servir, Solitas and Diakonia, CRWRC works with an organization called CORCRIDE. That's an acronym for a banding together of three denominations — the Central American Church, the Missionary Church and the Church of God. — who also provide assistance in agriculture, micro-enterprise, health and leadership training.

All of these Honduran partner organizations operate via grassroots "community participation boards," which in turn are made up of "solidarity groups" which relate directly to the families involved, so that as much as possible, anyone who wants to can get involved and have a voice.

The agriculture help provided is "semi-organic," says Don Miedema. They encourage cutting back on non-organic fertilizer, using manure, soil conservation, proper seeding. Due to the country's



CRWRC staffer Don Miedema

mountainous terrain, 66 per cent of farming is done on hillsides by 80 per cent of the farmers, where the methods used become even more crucial.

The health support involves mainly preventative healthcare, es-

specially for children. Monitoring growth tendencies in children, rather than weight by age, is helpful in determining whether they are healthy, and allowing for providing help if they're not.

The leadership training is usually training for church leadership. Fifteen per cent of Honduran churches are evangelical. "We don't really fall into the evangelical camp, nor the Catholic here," says Miedema. "Salvation brings change. We need to make sure to develop the leadership of the church."

To find partners, CRWRC "puts out feelers," Miedema explains. "We make contact with individuals. Word gets out that CRWRC is looking for a partner." Then the agency scrutinizes all comers, determining whether partnering with a particular group is compatible with CRWRC's mission.

### Help came when they had nothing

The difference between the old and new is stark. The old is a tiny mud and stick square. The new houses are perhaps twice the size — several real rooms, including kitchens — thick-walled, made of sturdy brick and mud-plaster. The housing project was all but complete here when I saw it in October. There was some plastering to be done — the mud taken from a large hole dug nearby and applied quite literally by hand; and three more

## News Comment

## Nose for News



Bert Hielema

**DECEMBER 25, 1999,** marked the start of the Holy Year. In 1300 the first *annus sanctus*, also called "Year of Jubilee," was introduced, fashioned on that well-known Mosaic regulation which occurred every 50 years among the Israelites, and of which one requirement is the forgiving of all debts. In later centuries the Roman Catholic Church ordered a Jubilee every 25 years, and this one, coinciding with the year 2000, may prove to be the most jubilant yet.

Rome, the city, is prepared to receive some 20 million pilgrims to honor the occasion, and every one of these will want to have a look at St. Peter's, and other "holy places" in the Vatican, and many will attend the special masses.

**TO LOOK A BIT HOLIER** than usual, or better to appear less secular than custom, Italian TV, notorious for its striptease shows, has dressed up its acts to include Holy Year documentaries, turn-of-the-millennium specials, lives of saints biographies, Bible stories and even sitcoms promoting spiritual values. One producer has made a program series called "Friends of Jesus," which concentrates on Jesus' more newsworthy followers, such as Thomas, the doubter, Judas, the betrayer and Mary Magdalene, the converted prostitute. Mary Magdalene is played by Maria Grazia Cuchinotta, a buxom blonde who played a James Bond girlfriend in the latest 007 movie.

Not everyone appreciates the series: "This is a massive overdose — Rome is turning into Teheran," complained a member of a watchdog group of lay citizens which monitors the Jubilee planning. "It could have a boomerang effect. The Holy Year could give rise to a new wave of anticlericalism among the young." Seeking to spare the sensitive feelings of the religious pilgrims, Rome's city fathers have shut down sex shops near the Vatican.

**TALKING ABOUT SEX** shops reminds me of a pope 500 years ago who allegedly made the Vatican one big bordello: the notorious Alexander VI. His reputation is so bad that even now, half a millennium later, his memory still haunts his successors. According to Johannes Burchard, a Vatican diarist during this pope's 11 year tenure, Alexander once hired 50 prostitutes. "The coupling took place in front of everyone present," Burchard wrote. "Silk tunics, cloaks and caps were given to those whom Alexander judged best. The winners were those who made love with the courtesans the greatest number of times."

Alexander is said to have fathered as many as nine illegitimate children, and did many other things which I think the editor would not allow me to repeat in this column. However, on the premise that this pope's reputation cannot possibly sink any lower, scholars are now being allowed to examine archives hidden in the

Vatican for five centuries and verify whether the stories about orgies, incest, bloodlust and avarice are based on truly historic facts or are fabrications invented by jealous adversaries.

**THE VATICAN HAS BEEN** in the news regarding another event that happened in that colorful period: the restoration of the Sistine Chapel, which was built from 1473-81, commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV (hence its name). It is so famous because its interior walls and ceiling are decorated with frescoes depicting biblical events, of which the most famous are by Michelangelo. On the chapel's west wall Michelangelo depicted his idea of the Last Judgment, a fresco now restored to its full glory.

The entire restoration involved a 20-year painful process which carefully removed the soot and dust accumulated during more than 450 years. The Sistine Chapel could well be in the news again soon: in it is the Sacred College of Cardinals which gathers to elect a new pope.

The lengthy pontificate of the John Paul II is undoubtedly approaching its last days. The present Holy Father is likely to be seen as one of the most important successors to the Apostle Peter, not just because of his charismatic personality but also because of his skillful use of the media. Yet I feel that he is a hard man to measure. He has often been radical on social and political questions, but his stand on Mary and women's roles in the church, and perhaps women in general, has been quite problematic. I must grant that he has been unequalled in his efforts to bring what he considers the Good News to a spiritually starved globe.

**TALKING ABOUT** spreading the gospel of salvation across the world reminds me of a new slogan: "Shop online and save the earth." That is the religious-sounding message from Dr. Joseph Romm and the Center for Energy and Climate Solutions. He advocates that we can save the earth when we buy whatever we can by using the opportunities offered through the Internet. We then bypass trips to stores, eliminate the construction of millions of square feet of shopping centres and save enormous amounts of fuel in the process.

"Work at home," he urges us, "which will do away with new office towers and in the process saves time, car expense, traffic jams and energy." He also prefers that we don't buy newspapers, but read them on the Internet, because

"every pound of paper produces three tons of greenhouse gasses." The past three years have already seen the biggest drop in energy use in 50 years. While the economy grew at 13 per cent there was only a two per cent growth in energy consumption. The reason: e-commerce.

**I DO USE THE INTERNET.** I have used it to compare prices and have bought one item there: a registered wedding gift. Quick and easy. I also use it for banking and paying bills; and I have always had a home office. But, no, the Internet will not save the earth. Only Jesus will, and soon that familiar face with a blond beard, blue eyes and a benign expression, well-known from our Sunday School days, will be a picture of the past. A painting by an artist who used a woman as a model for dark-skinned (male) Jesus has been selected by a Catholic publication as the winner of its contest to update the image of Christ for the new millennium.

The painting, "Jesus of the People," was selected from nearly 1,700 entries for the cover of the special millennium issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*. The painting shows a robed and haloed Jesus against a pale pink background which also has a yin-yang symbol — indicating balance — and a feather representing American Indian spirituality. "This Jesus looks like a peasant, dark, thick-lipped, yet dignified, with a touch of confident sadness," wrote Sister Wendy Beckett, well-known as the British nun who hosts a public television series on art and who selected the winning entry. Janet McKenzie, the winner, describes herself as a "devout agnostic" (!?) with an interest in many faiths. "This painting is about love," she said. "It's about reminding all of us about the importance of celebrating our differences."

**JUST BEFORE THE END** of 1999, *Time* magazine had a special feature on Jesus at 2000. When I was thinking about who has had the greatest impact on events in the last 2000 years, Jesus was who I thought of right away. *Time* had the same opinion, calling him the most powerful figure, not only in these two millennia, but in all human history. This has not been lost on the U.S. presidential hopefuls, some of whom are certainly playing the "Jesus card."

When John Kennedy was running for president almost 40 years ago, he made a solemn promise: "I believe in a president whose views on religion are his own private af-

fairs." How times have changed! Then a presidential candidate could not win unless he left religion out; now candidates think they cannot win unless they bring religion in. Now politicians use — or rather, abuse — religion as a club and a cloak in their lust for power. Reports the *New York Times*: "George W. Bush believes in the Holy Trinity of Ethanol, Jesus and Soft Money." Al Gore, who, if I remember correctly, did not pay anything to any church last year, suddenly is climbing on the W.W.J.D. bandwagon. In an interview with the *Washington Post* he says that he often asks himself: "What Would Jesus Do?" All this makes me wonder whether these men see Jesus more as a political savior than as a Savior who changes hearts.

**I AM SAD TO REPORT** that at the start of the new era Canada is going to pot. Back in the Roaring '20s when the U.S. had Prohibition, quite a few Canadians grew rich running booze over the border to give their neighbors a chance to imbibe. Now they are trying their luck with marijuana from British Columbia, where the most potent variety is being grown. Generally the strongest cannabis comes from the tropics, but sophisticated growers in Canada's soggiest province are using plant genetics and active, indoor hydroponic technology to gain higher yield and potency.

The stuff has an average of 15 to 20 per cent of the compound that produces a "high," making the "B.C. bud" America's pot of choice. It is estimated that British Columbia exports an estimated 800 tonnes, and the U.S. border patrol reckons that dope-smuggling has soared tenfold in the past two years alone. With light penalties, averaging less than \$2,500 (Cdn), and pocketing \$150,000-\$200,000 (Cdn) per crop, fines are simply seen as the cost of doing business. In Quebec, some farmers are complaining that gangs of pot growers are forcing them to let them hide plantations in the middle of sprawling fields of corn.

Just as the U.S. was angry about Canadian whiskey-smugglers 80 years ago, it now is increasingly edgy about marijuana. If the problem persists, perhaps the U.S. Army will intervene. Who knows what will happen when George W. Bush becomes president?

Bert Hielema's web page is [www.geocities.com/hielemab](http://www.geocities.com/hielemab). Visit it for past columns and other writings. He lives in Tweed, Ont.



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JANUARY 10, 2000

## Comment

## Thoughts on flipping the calendar page

**Dear Dirk:**

Happy New Millennium! If there's one thing I've learned in 1999, it's that "millennium" is spelled with two n's; and if there's one thing I'm looking forward to in 2000, it's that we can finally talk about something else. The most useful tip I've heard one needs to do to prepare for the new millennium is to set his or her old-model VCR to 1972 to make it Y2K-compatible (1972 and 2000 being identical calendar years). I've got my priorities straight — enough about stockpiling food supplies and the army being on stand-by alert.

I'm probably more excited about the fact that we're finally into another decade — if there ever was a decade to define Generation X, it was the '90s. But enough already. Time for the Baby Busters to have their turn in the media spotlight we've endured for the past decade.

What are your thoughts, Dirk, on the flipping of the calendar page?

*Elizabeth***Elizabeth,**

I don't know if I'm ready for the new millennium. Sure, my money is out of Asia and the vice-president promises that our university computer system is prepared. Psychologically, though, I feel ill-prepared. It's that number that has me irked. There's an authority to "2000." It seems to stand on its own, in three dimensions, like that big 20th Century Fox advertisement that comes on the screen just before the movie. If cyborgs will ever roam the earth, they'd have to do it in a year after 2000.

Still, I agree that it'll be nice to get this over with. What I like best is that there won't be one set time when the decade changes. It'll change for me 17 hours before it does for you. I will have partied, awakened, showered and worked for an afternoon before you even start sipping champaign. The big moment will be completely relative to location. And then there's the argument that the decade/millennium really starts January 1, 2001.

I know you're a movie fan, so I'll tell you this story. Last week a bunch of us wasted two hours and \$8 each on that new Arnold movie, *End of Days*. It was a testament to how Hollywood can drastically twist theology and still sell an end product — which in this case was a real waste. Walking out of the theatre was a pleasant slap across the face that we had all been expecting: No, it will not be like that.

You want something else to talk about, right? So do I. But I wonder what it will be. Maybe by March, everything will focus on the American election. The year 2000 will be a continuation of Democratic rule or a new era for Republicans.

*Dirk***Dirk,**

Oh dear. I never thought of that. The only thing worse than this millennium fever is the prospect of eleven months of American political debate. As if we haven't had enough of that this century. I feel sorry for poor Sir Wilfred who proclaimed so confidently that the 20th century would be Canada's. Wonder what he'd say now?

*E.***Elizabeth,**

Actually, Elizabeth, I'm looking forward to the big race. With each passing year I know more about politics, and when you know more about something you're more interested in it. Another reason I'm anticipating the race is that I'm now experiencing a bit of a "political philosophy" crisis. I think I'm moving more into the middle of the spectrum. But before that happens, I need to know more than I do. Hence, the Big Race will be a time for me to find out where I stand politically by hearing what the candidates say and seeing what they do.

Here's what I mean about my little crisis, Elizabeth. For the past decade, I've fancied myself the Canadian equivalent of a Democrat. Spending four years at Dordt College in northwest Iowa certainly bolstered my socialist sensitivities. Living in Sioux Center, I was often shocked by what conservative types would say about those not exactly like themselves. I vowed not to join their ranks.

Grad school, however, offered me much of the opposite extreme — self-proclaimed Communists who believed there is no truth, only "perspective," and that many of the institutions set up in our world are inherently oppressive. Anything proffered as "good," "true," or "right" was rejected for the violent philosophical framework which allowed it to exist in the first place.

Both extremes are useless, and for that reason I've been walking between them, enjoying my lack of commitment but also realizing that the only way to live the game of life is to play along — which means I have to make a decision — or decisions — in the future.

I know that politics is an interest of yours and that you know a lot about it. But before I tell you where I'm headed, I'll let you respond to these thoughts.

*Dirk*

**Two  
Under  
35**

Elizabeth Salomons



Dirk Schouten

**Dirk,**

I also think extremes are useless, Dirk, and I'm glad to hear you say that. I also consider myself pretty much a fence-sitter when it comes to politics because I'm reluctant to speak my mind only to later find out I didn't have a clue what I was talking about. Better to keep quiet and just listen. But you're right, ultimately it comes down to a choice we each have to make.

I once spent an afternoon discussing this very subject with a friend who proclaimed he didn't bother to vote anymore — he felt there was no point to it. I and the others in the room were horrified and tried to talk him out of it — one put on her "people died to give you that vote" hat and the other was a daughter of a politician and knew full well the cost of public service — but we didn't get very far.

I myself was fascinated because, even though a variety of positions of the political spectrum were represented in one room, each of us put aside our differences and declared the ultimate importance was the right to those differences.

But back to extremes: the thing is, it's been my experience that those who hold extreme positions usually spend a great deal of energy trying to assert that their position is the *only* one worth holding. I find that alarming. It's one thing to take a radical position. It's another to deny your neighbor the right to his or her position because it's not the same as yours.

*Elizabeth***Elizabeth,**

I agree with you, Elizabeth: extremes are scary. But even fence-sitters like the two of us have particular leanings. Although mine has been to the left, they're now shifting to the right. Because of a lack of space, I'll get to that more some time in the future.

A few years ago, then CC columnist Laura Smit (now teaching theology at Calvin College) wrote about the "tension" that exists between extremes. I like the word "tension" because it implies a lack of comfort. More importantly, it foreshadows the work necessary to find answers that take into consideration the needs of all. And that's something neither ultra-conservatives nor radical socialists care to give.

Have a Happy New Millennium!

*Dirk*

*Elizabeth Salomons is a freelance writer who lives in Vancouver. Dirk Schouten teaches literature and writing at Kozin University in South Korea.*

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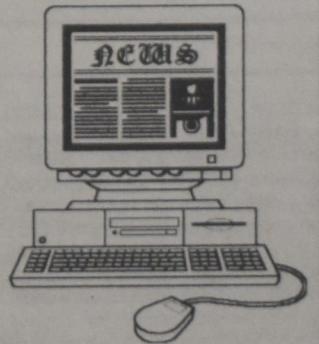
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## Classifieds

Classified Rates	Anniversary	Obituaries	Job Opportunities
<p><b>As of May 1999:</b> Note: 7% GST will be added to all prices listed below.</p> <p><b>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION</b> <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, eight business days prior to publication.</p> <p><b>RATES</b> The cost of advertising space is \$14.00 per column inch (pci) of length. (All columns are 2 inches wide.) This rate applies to all personal and family announcements as well as all other types of advertising, including multi-column display ads. Clients will be invoiced after publication.</p> <p><b>PHOTOS</b> There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged pci, but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. 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Please let us know when placing your ad that you want to take advantage of this offer.</p> <p><b>SUBMITTING YOUR AD</b> mail: <i>Christian Courier</i> #4 - 261 Martindale Road St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 fax: 905-682-8313 email: ccadpromo@aol.com</p> <p><b>OTHER INFORMATION</b> a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format. b) Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p>	<p>*****</p> <p>1950 January 18 2000 Exodus 33:15 "Then Moses said to Him, 'If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.'" It is with thanks to our Heavenly Father that we announce the 50th anniversary of our dear parents</p> <p><b>JOHN and DIANE LUCAS (DYK)</b> God has truly blessed us with Christian parents who have given us the perfect example of what marriage should be. We congratulate you, dear parents, and pray for God's continued blessings on you both. From your children: George and Betty Lucas — Oro Station Linda and Mark Mallette — Metcalfe, Ont. Rita and Meindert Prins — Georgetown, Ont. Annette and Bernie Smit — Oro Station, Ont. Harry and Christine Lucas — Oro Station, Ont. and twenty grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. We welcome their friends and relatives to an open house to be held in their honor, the Lord willing, on Saturday, January 22, 2000 at 571 8th Line North, Oro Medonte, from 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Their home address is 565 Line 8 North, Oro Medonte, ON L0L 2E0</p>	<p>1900 - 1999 <b>FRANCES (FROUKJE) VISSER (nee KOOTSTRA)</b> On Nov. 18, 1999, at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, Ont., it pleased the Lord to take home his child, our dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, in her 100th year. She was predeceased by her husband, Adrianus Visser, in 1986. Now unburdened, she may rejoice with him in the presence of the Lord. A LIFE LIVED TO THE FULL. Ps. 91:16. Her children: Lucy Hogeterp — Brampton, Ont. Metje VanderKloet-Visser — Bergum, Fr. Ruurd &amp; Henny Visser — Kitchener, Ont. Jikke &amp; Jan Bouwma — Wirdum, Fr. Betty &amp; Nick Anema — Simcoe, Ont. George &amp; Jessie Visser — Simcoe, Ont. Mels Noordermeer — Stryen, Z.H. Claire Visser — Brampton, Ont. Predeceased by her daughter Frances (1993), sons-in-law Peter Hogeterp (1991) and Ebe VanderKloet (1984) as well as one sister and two brothers. Lovingly remembered by her 39 grandchildren, 72 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren. The funeral service was held on Saturday, Nov. 20, 1999, at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Simcoe, Ont., Pastors P. VanEgmond and Ray VanderKooy officiating. Correspondence address: C. Visser, 273 Bartley Bull Pkwy., Brampton, ON L6W 2L2</p>	<p><b>Social Service Work</b> Become a part of our team of committed professionals providing loving care for needy children.</p> <p><b>Mutual Support Systems</b>, a parent model network of rural group foster homes in the Niagara peninsula for children experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties is searching for the following as part of its recent expansion:</p> <p><b>RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE WORKERS.</b> Related educational background is an asset. Competitive salary and benefits. This live-in position provides opportunities for out-of-province candidates.</p> <p>Please contact Randy Klassen at: <b>Mutual Support Systems</b> P.O. Box 397 Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0 phone: 905-892-4332 e-mail: rklassen@mutualsupport.net Visit us at: <a href="http://www.mutualsupport.net">http://www.mutualsupport.net</a></p>
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	<p><b>RUMPH (nee Guichelaar)</b> with joy and thanksgiving to God, David and Nancy are thrilled to announce the safe arrival of their precious son,</p> <p><b>JEREMY JACOB</b> born Thursday, August 26, 1999, weighing 8 lbs. 9 oz. Big sister Jessica is delighted with her new brother. Proud grandparents are Jake &amp; Teresa Rumph and Henry and Nies Guichelaar. Another great-grandchild for Lutina Rumph.</p> <p>Address: 62 Pelham Drive, Ancaster, ON L9K 1L4</p>		
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	<b>Home Exchange</b>		
	<p>Couple in Hamilton, Ont., area looking for family in the Netherlands to participate in a house exchange July 2000. Call 905-648-7817.</p>		

## Classifieds/Psychology

## Dordt Press

## new release

*Physical Education, Sports and Wellness: Looking to God as We Look at Ourselves*John Byl & Tom Visker, ed.  
paper, 336 pgs., \$19.95 U.S.

A collection of papers from the annual Conferences on Christianity, Sport, Leisure, and Wellness, 1994-1998. Contains five sections: 1) Your Body: Good and Beautiful; 2) Your Body: Glorifying God and Enjoying Him Forever; 3) Teaching Physical Education; 4) Learning Through Sport; and 5) Historically Rooted Perspectives. A companion volume to *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society* (Dordt College Press, 1994).

## other titles

*Sound Stewardship: How Shall Christians Think About Music?*  
by Karen De Mol  
1999, paper, 52 pgs., \$3.25 U.S.

Articulates a Christian perspective on music based on the realities of creation, fall, redemption, and eschaton. The author, professor of music at Dordt College, also considers several difficult issues, such as what makes music Christian, how music carries meaning, and how we judge music. Originally published as an article in *Pro Rege*, Dordt's quarterly journal.

*Falling Into Grace*  
by Laura Apol  
1998, paper, 99 pgs., \$10.25 U.S.

A collection of poetry and prose exploring the grace-filled experience of everyday moments. "The pieces in this collection...remind me of how deeply grace runs through and around each of our lives," says Apol, who teaches writing and children's literature at Michigan State University.

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## Retirement

Pastor Aubrey Van Hoff of Tillsonburg C.R.C. will officially retire from the ministry of the Word. His final service is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 30, 2000, at 2:30 p.m. The congregation of Tillsonburg, Ont., is grateful to God for his many years of service to the Lord Jesus.

We invite you to join us in worship. If you are unable to attend, we encourage you to send words of greeting and congratulations to:

Rev. Aubrey and  
Mrs. Dianne Van Hoff,  
10 Windermere Avenue,  
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## Job Opportunity

John Knox Christian School in Woodstock, Ontario requires a **Transportation Supervisor**. The duties, which will begin in July, include scheduling, minor maintenance, and some administrative tasks. For additional information and salary, please contact:

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## Obituary

JAN SIEBREN (John) BAKKER a child of God went to be with his Heavenly Father on Dec. 11th at the age of 77.

Survived by: his loving wife, Jan, one daughter: JoAnn (Mark) Nanninga — Neerlandia, Alta five sons:

Selwyn(Cheri) — Pickering, Ont. Sidney (Charlotte) — Oshawa, Ont. Wayne (Christine) — Edmonton, Alta.

Corneal (Sandra) — Rockyford, Alta.

David (Ronghui) — Osaka, Japan and ten grandchildren.

Five brothers:

Walter (Eunice) of Edmonton, Alta, Harmen (Frieda) of Caledonia, Ont., Durk (Fina) of Grand Rapids, Mich., Everett (Trudy) of Pefferlaw, Ont., Peter (Evelyn) of Edmonton, Alta.

One sister: Agnes Bron of Edmonton, Alta; sister-in-law Janice Bakker, of Sarnia, Ont., brother-in-law Jim(Magda) Dykstra of Edmonton, Alta.

Predeceased by his parents, Sjoerd and Sjouke Bakker, brothers, Cornelis and Horace; sisters, Froukje and Hendrine; one daughter Sheila Bakker.

Funeral service was held on Dec. 16th at the First Christian Reformed Church of Victoria, BC with Rev. Paul Lam officiating.

Correspondence address:  
Mrs. Jan Bakker, Suite 301,  
4535 Viewmont Ave., Victoria, BC  
V8Z 5L3

Want to change the world?  
Start at homeGetting Unstuck  
Arlene Van Hove

Mahatma Gandhi, the famous non-violent resister from colonial India, once said, "The changes needed in our world should be reflected in ourselves." These words are still relevant today. And we Christians may want to ponder the implications. Are we as zealous in changing ourselves as we are in changing the world?

Personal change often feels more threatening than does societal change. It is about looking inward rather than outward. Yet we are responsible for both. Francis Schaeffer once wrote: "People may not expect to see perfection, but they do expect to see the gospel make a substantial difference in the character of Christians."

## Personal change takes time

The beginning of a new year often motivates us to make resolutions to live more effectively. We decide to quit smoking, eat less, be more organized, spend more time in devotions, give more to charity or live a more stewardly lifestyle. A week later we will have broken our resolutions and we continue to live as before.

Unfortunately, real personal change takes time and often demands more of us than we are willing to give. I am reminded of a conversation I had some time ago with a worried mother who was trying to find counseling for her seriously depressed daughter. Yet the mother was unwilling to give up her own promiscuous lifestyle. Unfortunately, we sometimes continue to live with wounds that manifest themselves in our lives in ways that are not in accordance with our beliefs.

## Life is about change

We often forget that life is about spiritual and psychosocial growth that comes through change. Change involves renewing our understanding of God, ourselves and others as we move through life. Every developmental stage has its challenges, and how we manage these challenges has a direct impact upon our emotional and spiritual health as we age. Ironically, an important characteristic we need to develop for the new century is our adaptability to change.

While personal change is normal, we rarely make it our friend. We prefer what feels familiar and secure. We want life to be "working" for us no matter how ineffective or destructive that may be. Consequently, necessary change usually comes through pain. When we are in enough pain we will be motivated to do something about the way we're living.

## Changing ourselves changing the world

Sometimes we wait too long to change; consequently, we rob ourselves of the joy that personal maturity and integrity bring. Sometimes it is too late, and we are left with regrets, as is evident in the words of a Chassidic rabbi on his deathbed:

*When I was young, I set out to change the world. When I grew a little older, I perceived that this was too ambitious, so I set out to change my state. This, too, I realized as I grew older was too ambitious, so I set out to change my town. When I realized I could*

*not even do this, I tried to change my family. Now as an old man, I know that I should have started by changing myself. If I had started with myself, maybe then I would have succeeded in changing my family, the town, or even the state – and who knows, maybe even the world!*

And so, at the beginning of the New Year, we may want to ask ourselves: what changes would we like to make so that we can reflect the changes our world needs?

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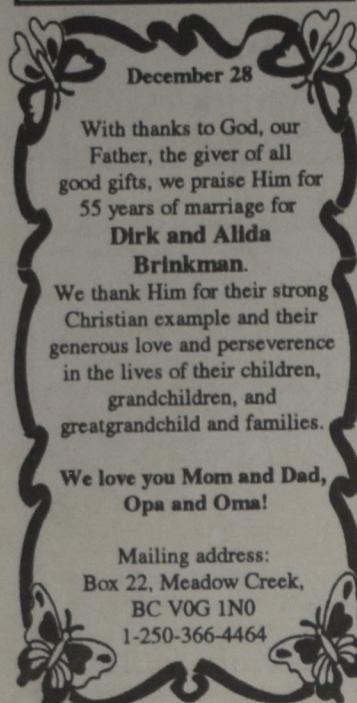
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Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

## Advertising/Business Directory

## Anniversary



## Obituary

Sneek the Neth. Hamilton Ont.  
1924 - 1999  
"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. 5:1)  
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Dear father of:  
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Ted  
Tillie & John Biebesheimer  
Helen & Selwyn Uittenbosch  
Jackie & Ralph Meyer  
Henry & Kathy  
Mary-Ann  
Loving Pake of 17 grandchildren.  
Predeceased by granddaughter Heidi (1978) and daughter-in-law Ida (1995).  
The funeral service was held Dec. 10, 1999 at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ont.  
Correspondence address:  
Johanna de Jong, 437 West 5th St., Hamilton, ON L9C 3P5

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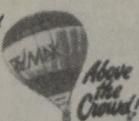
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## Events/Advertising

**Calendar of Events**

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- Jan. 28-29 Pre-marriage seminar, First CRC, Guelph. For information or to register call 519-822-7720.  
 Jan. 30 Dutch Service - Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, **Ancaster**, 3 p.m., Rev. Henry DeBolster. (#)  
 Mar. 12 Dutch Service - Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, **Ancaster**, 3 p.m., Rev. Ralph Koops. (#)



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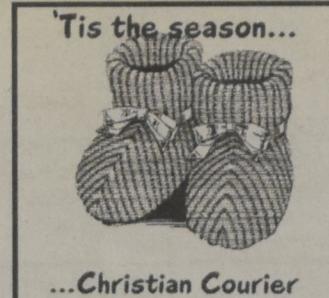
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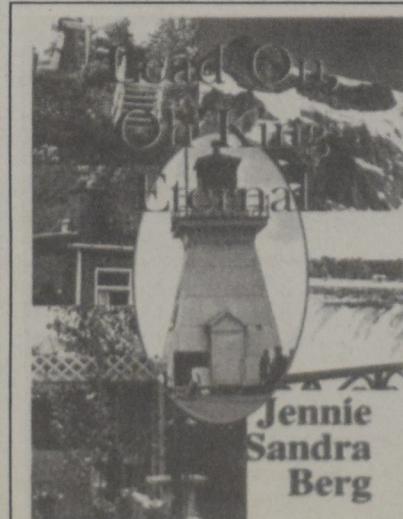
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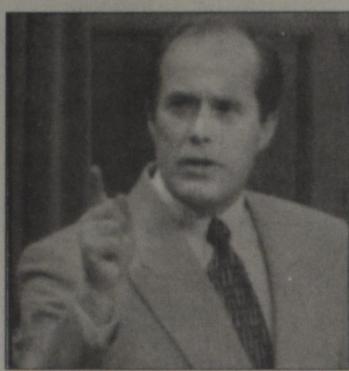
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## News

# Reform MP defends right to spank their kids



COURTESY ERIC LOWTHER

Reform MP Eric Lowther

**Alan Doerksen**

OTTAWA — In December, an Ontario court heard a challenge to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms from a group that wants to remove part of the Criminal Code that allows parental discipline such as spanking. Calgary Reform MP Eric Lowther opposes the challenge and defends the right of children and teachers to physically discipline children.

Lowther, Official Opposition Children and Families Critic, explained in a recent press release that the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law launched the court case in order to have Section 43 of the Criminal Code declared unconstitutional. "I believe that parents should have

the prerogative to discipline their children within the limits already defined in Section 43 of the Criminal Code," asserted Lowther.

Section 43 of the Criminal Code states: "Every school teacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances."

Ironically, the federal Court Challenges program contributed tax dollars to help launch this Charter challenge of Section 43 of the Criminal Code, Lowther observed.

**Loving discipline is not abuse**

Lowther outlined some of his reasons to support retaining Section 43: "Parental discipline is quite different from child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect should not be tolerated, but Section 43 strikes a balance by protecting children from abuse while still allowing parents to correct their children, within limits that are acceptable to Canadian society."

"Responsible, loving parents sometimes have to correct their

children to keep them from harm," noted Lowther. "Removing Section 43 may make criminals out of parents who use reasonable corrective action with their kids (between 70 and 75 per cent of parents, according to University of Manitoba and Brock University studies).

"Parents, not governments, are best suited to determine the needs, including disciplinary measures, of their own children," stated Lowther. "Removing a means for parents to discipline their children will result in more state intrusion into family life. Maintaining Section 43 shows respect for Canadian

parents and it shows respect for the democratic process. It is through debate in Parliament, not in court chambers, where important public policy decisions like this should be made."

Lowther concluded, "If there are concerns about what is deemed reasonable in parental discipline, it would be better to develop guidelines rather than potentially criminalizing all parents by a court decision. Using tax dollars to fund a lobby group to make an end run around the democratic process and push social policy through the courts is inappropriate."

## Teamwork multiplies outreach to Honduran gangs

**Wally Poor & Rebecca Johnson**

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (BP)—His head was splitting. Armando Meza crept slowly from his bed and turned on the radio to get some music to soothe his aching head. But the music didn't help.

"I knelt and asked the Lord to pardon me, that I had failed to stop drinking before because I was a sick alcoholic. But I asked him to please help me," Meza recalled. "I turned on the TV and found the answer I was seeking." A former alcoholic, now a pastor in Costa Rica, was giving his testimony on a broadcast of the "700 Club."

At the end of the program, Meza prayed. "Lord, if you could change that man, I want to be like him. Lord, help me. I want to be like him, I want to be a pastor."

Little did he know that not only would he be a pastor, but God eventually would team him with a Southern Baptist missionary to transform youth gangs and neighborhoods in Honduras' capital.

**A new challenge**

Ten years later, Meza became pastor of Cerro Grande Baptist Church, a congregation in Tegucigalpa that missionaries Tim and Dorcas Patterson had helped start. The Pattersons learned Meza had a burden for the youth of the Cerro Grande neighborhood. Even before he was pastor, he had tried to evangelize the local youth, many of whom were gang members. Nothing proved very successful.

After a heart attack in 1997, Meza was praying about how to reach the youth. He felt led to approach the coach of a soccer team.

The coach told the pastor he needed help getting uniforms for the team. Meza promised to help and began accompanying the team to their games. The boys, already involved in crime, were leery of the pastor at first. But gradually,

they began to warm up to him.

"At the beginning, it wasn't the proper time to talk to them about Christ. But I was praying that God would be preparing their hearts," Meza said. Finally he was able to get the boys to come to the church once a week for Bible study.

**Home-grown leadership**

As time went by, the boys began to accept Christ. But they did not integrate well into the church. Patterson gave Meza an idea that cracked the ministry wide open.

"I shared with him some things that I had learned about church-planting movements," Patterson said. "I introduced 'autonomous reproducing house churches' with home-grown leadership.

"We discussed the idea of evangelizing a natural grouping of people and to allow that to become their church. We discussed the possibilities of raising leaders from the new converts and allowing each natural social grouping [gang] to become a church in itself.

"Armed with this new concept, Meza had no barriers to deal with such as buildings, established church programs and protocol," Patterson said.

The new approach worked, and God began moving so dramatically among the gang members that a profound change was being made in the Cerro Grande neighborhood.

Meza's work among the gangs was making such a difference, in fact, that it attracted the attention of a local television station, which aired a program on the outreach. The publicity generated invitations to start groups elsewhere.

Now, less than five years later, the gang outreach has multiplied to 30 groups with 1,100 youth in 15 neighborhoods. Meza also works with 800 students in city schools with a program promoting sexual abstinence until marriage.

## News Digest

**Doctor sings to raise funds**

WHITBY, Ont. — Dr. Benjamin Ho, a singing gastroenterologist, has the, uh, intestinal fortitude to take the stage as a singer, reports the *Toronto Star*. Once a year, the 35-year-old dons a tuxedo and takes to the stage to sing Italian classical love songs, Broadway show tunes and Christmas carols.

Last December, Ho hosted his sixth annual Christmas concert, a fundraiser which has raised more than \$60,000 total for hospitals in Whitby and Oshawa. "I don't have any hobby or interest I enjoy as much as singing," says Ho. "I dream about it, I wake up singing, I sing in the shower and in the office between patients."

**Martinis keep you young**

LONDON, Ont. — A Canadian laboratory's twisted bit of research on the virtues of the martini — shaken, not stirred — may lend Hollywood a shot of credibility. Biochemists at the University of Western Ontario concocted an experiment that found shaken martinis may be more healthy than stirred ones.

The findings, published in December with other light-hearted research in the *British Medical Journal*, could explain why James Bond is still a "hunky" instead of decrepit: Secret Agent 007 orders his favorite drink no other way.

Shaken martinis have twice as much anti-oxidant power as stirred ones, says the report. Anti-oxidant power helps fight diseases such as cancer; it offsets the harm oxygen can do to cells as people age.

**Cruisers silly questions**

ORLANDO, Fla. — Tourists taking their first cruise often ask silly questions. John Heald, cruise director on Carnival's ship *Triumph*, told the *Orlando Sentinel* of an on-ship question-and-answer session during which a passenger asked if the ship has generators. Heald's straight-faced reply: "No, we have a really long extension cord!"

During a day at sea, a passenger asked him: "Is that ocean water in the pool?"

"Yes."

"See?" the woman said to her friend. "I told you that's why it's so rough in the pool."

Heald's personal favorite dumb question is: "What do you do with the ice carvings after they've melted?"



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